Integrating NGO WASH Programs with Government Plans: *Experiences from the Millennium Water Alliance in Latin America, Ethiopia, and Kenya*

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September 22, 2015
Introduction

- Community management has been the predominant rural water management model supported by NGOs in lower-income countries.
- MWA’s 2014-2024 strategic plan calls for its work to focus at the municipal or district level.
- The guiding principles for this shift include:
  - Focusing on full WASH coverage in specific districts, municipalities, or counties
  - Placing governments at the center
  - Supporting the local service authority in advocacy at regional and national level
  - Focusing on supporting ongoing service delivery vs. simply first-time access
- These principles align with Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership aim to support country processes with a focus on national leadership and ownership.
- These principles also align with the soon to be approved SDG6.
Purpose

- This exercise was undertaken to discover in more detail what the new strategic guidelines mean in our current programs and how we can effectively build on them.
- Its purpose was therefore to analyze how MWA currently interacts with governments in its Latin America, Ethiopia, and Kenya programs to better understand the successes, challenges, and trends in how we and our members engage with government.
- This presentation summarizes the analysis, gives specific examples, and presents the outlook for government engagement in upcoming MWA programs, however does not attempt to represent all our members experiences across all countries where they work.
How MWA works

- MWA has worked since 2003 to develop effective, long-term partnerships
- 16 members and 3 regional programs
- Permanent staff in Washington, DC, Kenya, and Ethiopia manage programs with multiple members in Latin America and Africa
- We aim to develop our partnerships as a platform for leveraging donor, government, and private sector collaboration to achieve our common goal of universal WASH access.
- Value added to our members in terms of joint advocacy, introduce innovations, address common challenges and serve as learning platform so our members can scale solutions in their larger programs.
## Analytical framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Level of Government Engagement</th>
<th>Characteristics defining the level of government engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership</strong></td>
<td>The NGO shares accountability for programmatic success/failure and outputs with local and/or national government. The NGO works with government to establish policies and management arrangements. Increased emphasis on policymaking and government service provision. The program may operate under and/or co-fund nationally “owned” plan or SWAp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Both NGO and local or national government are financially committed to output delivery with funds managed separately. The focus of programming remains outputs with an emphasis on hardware delivery. The program aims to operate within local and/or national policy but is not accountable to a national program or regulatory body.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation</strong></td>
<td>The NGO seeks to engage local and national government to communicate its plans, solicit input, and align with policies but government is not responsible for project delivery or monitoring; the NGO drives interaction with government.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Permission</strong></td>
<td>Local government grants access but there is no further engagement. NGO does not necessarily work in alignment with a national plan or policy.</td>
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Results – where do MWA-supported programs in each country fall in the framework?

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<th>Qualitative Level of Government Engagement</th>
<th>Qualitative results by country (heuristic)</th>
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Increasing engagement
Mexico: Permission, Consultation, and Participation

Permission modality

- In certain remote parts of Veracruz and Oaxaca states, the implementing NGO works directly with committees it forms in villages to build family rainwater harvesting tanks and composting latrines and promote hygiene.
- It has permission to operate from but does not have further significant interaction with municipal government.
- Nationally, it is less common for NGOs to engage local government to implement WASH than in Central America; there is less experience with WASH NGO/government relationships but also opportunity to shape them in alignment with the new strategic priorities.

Participation modality

- In municipal centers and small towns, a different MWA member learned how to engage municipal governments to enhance their publically-funded water supply interventions.
- The NGO and government each fund part of the infrastructure, the NGO aims to improve project planning and adds hygiene promotion and operational training.
- Not yet engaging the local, state, or federal government in strategic planning or policymaking and enforcement.
Guatemala & Honduras: Participation with many aspects of Partnership

- The implementing NGOs of Lazos de Agua in each country work in specific municipalities in long-term programs.
- They emphasize establishing municipal water offices in alignment with national policies that aim to provide both water system construction and ongoing support to local water committees.
- They continuously engage municipal authorities to build planning, public funding allocation, and technical capacity in the appropriate municipal offices.
- They provide funding for construction, but at parity or in a minority stake compared with municipal government and according to mutually developed long-term plans.
- They do not share financial accounting systems; municipal finances and NGO donated funds are handled separately.
Examples in Guatemala and Honduras

**Tacaná, Guatemala**
- Established the *Oficina Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento* with 6 full-time public sector staff
- Supported the OMAS to create a master plan to direct government and external funding according to local priorities
- Facilitates bimonthly meetings with all local WASH stakeholders
- Local technical expertise for water supply planning is growing
- NGO policy to consistently increase the level of government financial commitments to new water supply projects

**San Antonio de Cortés, Honduras**
- Worked with the municipal government to establish an organizational model for a municipal association of water committees, with clear roles for the NGO, government, communities, and water users
- Works closely with the *Comité Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento* to draft ordinances for requiring household sanitation facilities and to direct external offers of aid
- Incorporates the municipal environmental office into water supply planning in a continuous effort to map and conserve watershed areas
- NGO policy is to fund only a minority stake in new and rehabilitation water supply projects
Ethiopia: Participation with increasing aspects of Partnership

- MWA’s longstanding program has trended away from performing only community-level projects at the Consultation level
- **It has a number of Partnership-level aspects:**
  - Aims to align with the One WASH National Program SWAp
  - Selected partners spearhead national policy initiatives, notably Self-supply Acceleration and water quality issues
  - The current program has an increased emphasis on taking national policy to implementation and participating in sector working groups
- **It retains many Participation-level aspects:**
  - Donor and government finances remain separate despite the SWAp co-funding mechanism, although this mechanism is also recognized in the Country OWNP.
  - MWA partners plan interventions aligned with local governments priorities.
  - Retains significant emphasis on WASH infrastructure outputs at the community level given those national priorities but pushes for software activities within a constrained policy environment.
Kenya: Moving from Consultation to Partnership

Consultation-level Characteristics of the KALDRR Program, 2013-14

- **Emphasis on direct NGO technical intervention** to increase water storage capacity in communities and improve WASH in health facilities
- Sponsored piloting of remote sensing-based hydrogeological studies for rural water supply planning
- Short timeframe – 2 years

Proposed Kenya Program Partnership-level Characteristics, 2015-2020

- Views NGOs as facilitators for government leadership and scalable business models
- Primary objective emphasizes governance: “to establish responsive, accountable county-level governance frameworks that ensure sustainable provision of water and pasture”
- Aligned with national drought emergency prevention policy and national development plan
- Longer-term – 5 years
NGO government engagement in MWA programs so far

**Successes**

- Where Partnership is a well-articulated NGO goal in a long-term program, local governments have responded with increased levels of financial investment (e.g. Guatemala, Honduras, some municipalities in Mexico)
- The identified need for local government leadership and a longer-term horizon were accepted by all stakeholders and donors in the currently proposed Kenya program
- Government engagement is a key strategic feature of MWA programs in all 3 regions
- Support for developing municipal or district master plans and M&E systems is increasing

**Challenges**

- Breaking down the persistent culture of output-oriented engagement in which NGOs are seen and may see themselves as “hardware” providers to local government
- Implementation gaps between national policy aims and capacity at the local government level (e.g. Self-Supply Acceleration in Ethiopia)
- Some countries or regions lack clearly articulated policies, strategies, or plans for WASH development (e.g. Oaxaca state, Mexico; La Guajira, Colombia), preempting NGO policy alignment
- Longer-term program horizons may conflict with shorter-term donor timelines
- Changes in municipal technical staff for political reasons
Finding the right level of NGO and government engagement to be effective

- Achievement of increased WASH sustainable services
- Effective level of government engagement
- Local government capacity and national environment
- NGO strategy and capacity
Limitations

- The results presented are limited to an internal analysis conducted exclusively by MWA.
- The analytical framework could be used with extended qualitative data collection to deepen the study, but this presentation includes only preliminary results.
- Although MWA programs are tending to aim for higher levels of government engagement, the most appropriate level is not necessarily the highest in every circumstance; national and local contexts for government vary widely and the most appropriate level of engagement defined to
Initial Conclusions

- MWA is encouraging a significant shift in outlook for its regional programs to position NGOs as facilitators of lasting government action.
- There are internal challenges in INGO culture as well as external ones at the national and global levels that maintain an inertia for NGO WASH projects to be relatively short-term, output-oriented, and aimed at delivering projects rather than contributing to improving the enabling environment.
Some Remaining Key Questions

- Can we NGOs imagine significantly contributing to reaching the SDG goal of universal WASH without better engaging with governments?
- What changes do NGO need to internally address to be effective engaging governments?
- What do we do to understand capacity of local government authorities to engage them and plan our interventions at an appropriate level?
- How do we address issues of capacity, rotation of key staff for political reasons?
- Emphasis on hardware vs. A balance approach to sustainable services?
- How do we respond to corruption or political fights among different groups that can put at risk interventions?
Thank You

Millennium Water Alliance