

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AND EXEMPLARY WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES: A STORY OF KAPOETA NORTH COUNTY, SOUTH SUDAN

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Country: South Sudan

Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

CHALLENGE

Four years ago, the county authorities of Kapoeta North did not have an office building, let alone a water and sanitation department. The local authority from the remote region of South Sudan's Eastern Equatoria state was literally operating from under a tree. At the time of its establishment, the county was one of the regions with the highest cases of the painful guinea worm parasite in the world. In addition, diseases such as worms, scabies, eye infections and diarrhoea were still extremely common. Although a number of water facilities had been drilled in the county, almost 40% of these water points were not functioning. Communities were forced to drink unsafe water, and therefore suffered from water-related diseases.



Women waiting for the borehole to be repaired

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

The lack of WASH technical staff and facilities did not deter the county from striving to provide services. The first step the county authority took in 2007 was to seek support from SNV and many other well-wishers. SNV in collaboration with 2 local capacity builders: Losolia Rehabilitation Development Association (LRDA) and Kapoeta Development Initiative (KDI) responded by organising a multi-stakeholder meeting which brought together various actors in the county to initiate discussions on water and sanitation. The major WASH issues identified included (i) poor operation and maintenance of boreholes and handpumps leading to break-downs (ii) lack of spare parts to facilitate their repairs (iii) lack of awareness on the status of hygiene and sanitation in the county (iv) poor planning and coordination of WASH activities within the county and communities.

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OUTCOME

awareness on the status of hygiene and sanitation in the county (iv) poor planning and coordination of WASH activities within the county and communities.

It was recognised that to address these issues a planning and coordination mechanism was necessary. SNV facilitated a number of stakeholder meetings, which led to the establishment of the WASH Steering committee comprising of the Local Authorities, department of health and Education, international NGOs like AAR-Japan, Carter Centre and SNV and Local NGOs namely KDI and LRDA. Terms of reference were developed to guide the committee on its roles and responsibilities.

The WASH Steering Committee met on regular basis between 2008 and 2009. Notably the committee recognised the absence of WASH technical staff and its effect on the implementation of WASH activities in the county. The lack of WASH technical staff was addressed at county and state coordination meetings. Currently an Assistant Commissioner for Water and Sanitation for Kapoeta North County has been appointment and is expected to report to the county soon.

Another outcome of these steering committee meetings was the development of WASH strategy to address the initially identified WASH issues. It was noted that there was lack of efficient modalities for operation and management (O&M) of the existing water systems as well as limited information and expertise in regards to Knowledge, Attitude and Practise (KAP) on hygiene and sanitation improvements.

To address poor functionality of the boreholes a pilot was initiated with the aim of establishing a functional O&M system at community and county level. The O&M pilot consisted of a partnership between the county, AAR-Japan, Carter Centre, SNV and the two local NGOS, KDI and LRDA. LRDA and KDI were instrumental in supporting the county to mobilise the communities and creating awareness on the importance of O&M. Jointly the partners organised a training of trainers of existing pump mechanics, who in turn trained 23 pump care takers and rehabilitated 6 boreholes in guinea worm endemic areas. The county appreciated the training as one of the staff expressed:

"The training was very useful to me. I never knew where water is coming from, I was just drinking it. Now I know how water is pumped. It helps me to understand my work better" Kapoeta North County planner.



The facilitator and the county mechanics demonstrating the working principle of the hand pump and how to use the different tools

Currently the six boreholes are serving a population of 3,600 people, as well as their livestock.

As a next step, SNV will facilitate partnerships to address procurement and distribution of spare parts and formation of the community management water and sanitation committees in the county. Presently the spare parts are now being obtained from NGOs such as Association of Aid and Relief (AAR) -Japan, Carter Centre, and then distributed to the communities. However this may not be sustainable in the long term and the county will need to define modalities of procuring and disseminating the spares to the communities in an affordable manner.

Another activity emerging from the steering committee meetings was to undertake a KAP study. The aim of the study was to establish the status of hygiene and sanitation and create awareness among county staff on its importance in order to identify and support interventions measures.

The KAP results have revealed that the county has one of the lowest sanitation coverage in the state. Approximately 90% of the population have no latrines and resort to open defecation.



Only four institutional latrines were found in the entire county and effective use of this was still debatable.

The county faces a difficult task for changing people's attitudes as illustrated in the following quote. "Why should we construct latrines, when we have enough bush that God gave us to use?" one elderly man asked in a meeting.

Status of an institutional latrine in Kapoeta North County

IMPACT

Currently the county is developing a proposal to set in place institutional toilets in public places such as the town centre. The proposal includes both infrastructure development and the management of the facilities. This entails modalities of paying for use of services that will cover the following costs, cleaning and payment of workers. The proposal will be submitted to potential donors for support.

SNV in collaboration with the county and two local NGOs have developed a county hygiene and sanitation plan that aims to address the hygiene and sanitation issues emerging from the KAP study. The plan includes, institutional strengthening and application of innovative participatory approaches such Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) which will be applied to facilitate the improvement of hygiene and sanitation practices in the county.

LESSONS LEARNED

For the past four years, SNV has worked in closely with Kapoeta North County to move towards improved WASH services at county and community level. Various capacity building approaches were used such as MSP, Advocacy, Networking and partnership and investment brokering. During capacity support to the county the following key lessons were learned:

- Bringing different stakeholders together allows a wide range of issues to be addressed – and for potential effective solutions to be found.
- Holding stakeholder forums help partners appreciate the importance of working and planning together. Coordinated planning allows the best use of resources – and the minimizing of duplication of efforts.
- Such approaches however require both patience and time. Deep-rooted cultural beliefs slow down progress, and people still use unsafe water and are not willing to use safe excreta disposal methods.
- But given the mandate that the local authority has, they can be key to coordinating stakeholders at county level to plan and implement sustainable services