



The 7th Northern Uganda Region WASH Learning Forum held on 2/12/2020 at Gracious Hotel Lira Uganda.

Summary Brief

The Northern Uganda Region WASH Learning Forum (NRLF) was initiated in 2012 with support from Civil Society Organizations working in Acholi and Lango sub regions. The annual event is coordinated by the Directorate of Water Development through the Rural Water and Sanitation Center (RWSC) I of the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE). From its initiation, 6 learning events had been held until the 7th which took place at Gracious Palace Hotel on 2nd December in Lira City.

The MWE through the RWSC I steered the committee to organize the 7th NRLF under the theme ***“The Invisible link: WASH, financing and Covid 19”***. The event attracted a number of participants including MWE regional staff, District Water Officers from Northern Uganda, and CSOs like NETWAS Uganda, Amref Health Africa, Link to Progress, Divine Aid, GloFord Ug, Plan International, JF Well works Africa, AFSRT, HEWASA, JESE, SNV etc.

A number of presentations were made to cover Innovations for WASH Financing, Coordination of the stakeholders and the new National Framework of O&M of Rural Water Infrastructure.



John from WASEU making a presentation on the role of private sector in WASH

Key points arising

- The Impact of the Water Boards at the Sub County and District has not been realized. The money is collected but is not used for its purpose. That is one of the reasons why many WASH infrastructures like boreholes are not sufficiently maintained.
- The scale up of the WASH FIN (a microfinance institution established by WASEU) services to other districts like Lira. This is because some of these districts have people doing/ interested in WASH businesses but do not have startup capital. Therefore, affordable WASH loan products would be necessary and vital for them to pick up.
- The district money for rehabilitation(O&M) is so small to cause an impact. This causes delays in O&M of some of these facilities. The limited funding from the government is usually because of the government's budgeting and allocation principles for resources of **"Some for all not all for some"**. This is meant to ensure equitable access for the available resources.
- On the issue of coordination committees, the structures exist but their inefficient functionality is due to the limited participation in the engagement meetings by partners, discussing similar issues every time, facilitation of members to participate, members of the committee are not officially approved and some development partners do not report their work.
- Strategies suggested for the enhancement and sustainability of coordination between the various partners include promotion of low cost coordination activities, creation of district specific coordination guidelines, mainstreaming cross cutting issues, documentation and sharing of relevant information, as well as Improving transparency and accountability of the activities.
- The new National Framework of O&M for Rural Water Infrastructure has been introduced to drive the change from corrective maintenance to preventive maintenance as well as reduce the challenges with Community Based Management System (CBMS). These challenges include inefficient asset management, inadequate institutional capacity, poor source protection and climate change effects. The new approach that will be known as the CBMS Plus will ensure a centralized Professional Management Approach to the construction, management and operation of the Water Infrastructure. This framework also grants the districts authoritative power to manage and gazette water systems.

Reactions to O&M Framework

- Communities with point of water sources will be encouraged to efficiently manage their facilities. The communities accessing water from protected springs will continue to collect a maintenance fee. For shallow wells, the communities will be supported to remove the source of contamination or write off the shallow well if nothing can be done to ensure the safety of water accessed.
- Since the framework is proposing major challenges, the development partners should coordinate more with the district officials and jointly write proposals so as to be efficiently guided.
- Before rehabilitation of any water source infrastructure, thorough investigations to determine the best course of action whether rehabilitation or writing off. The Ministry is now encouraging the shifting from galvanized metals and casing to those with steel. For the case of Agago district with 266 non-functional boreholes out of the 900 boreholes. An investigation should be done on why the number is high.

General Discussion and way forward

- The district stakeholders should be made aware of the new framework and its implementation road map.
- There is need to look into the way of operation of the district water boards. This is to ensure they perform as expected.
- The CSOs and the district should harmonize their work plans so that they jointly implement and monitor the activities. This is intended to align with the new District Development Plans.
- In order to improve WASH financing at district level, the development partners should provide trainings to district officials on how to write proposals as a way of capacity building.
- COVID -19 WASH financing presents us with an opportunity to advocate and set up a number of WASH infrastructure. However, we need to make sure the interventions and innovations implemented are sustainable even beyond COVID -19.
- The development partners too need to follow the six critical requirements of O&M as they carry out routine maintenance of WASH infrastructure.
- The new National O&M framework should be piloted in some sub counties because full board adoption from the start may not be achievable and sustainable. The pilot areas will enable learning before scale up.
- This new framework needs to be publicized widely. Community sensitizations and radio talk shows and other forums should be used to publicize this.
- Development partners should share success stories especially for approaches that would be scaled up in other areas. A case in point is the success story of the efficiency of water boards in Kole district being supported by SNV.