The contribution of networking and partnerships in community initiatives to scale-up of water supply services, Geita District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper is intended to present, how learning from networking and partnership at different level contributes to the community and district initiatives to scale-up the water supply services in the Geita District, Tanzania.

Geita is a district in Mwanza Region, Tanzania where Plan International has an integrated Child Centered Community Development program for the last 4 years.
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The paper will show how the learning about the scaling-up concept at the Regional Workshop in Ethiopia and the partnership at the district level initiate two changes to scale-up water supply services in Geita District.

The two important changes in attitude and practice that are observed, both in Plan staff and district stakeholders including the local governments:
   - *Sustainability depends on institutional arrangement of the community and the necessary support of the government and other stakeholders not only on technology. Using available water sources to their optimum level and strengthening the right institutional set-up at different level is considered as the best option. Tambukareli Village is benefiting from this learning*
   - *Support the Shilabela Village Water User Associations to implement their initiative of privatizing their water supply service. It is an exciting new approach with 6 months encouraging experience. The initiative needs follow-up and documentation to support other communities to adopt the process.*

The paper will inform how Plan International is documenting and using its networks to share the knowledge at all level. It will also insure the ongoing action research incorporates these learning

Conclusion:
It is important to see the learning at global, regional, country and distinct level is synchronized to have some impacts at the village level. It is also a lesson that all networking and alliances need to have a clear agenda to facilitate the dynamism of poor people in developing countries in initiating and leading positive changes in their development process.

1 Background

The water and sanitation decade, 1980-90, gained reasonable global attention for the sector and laid the foundations for long term vision and strategies.

Over the last 20 years, many pro-poor sector policies and programs have been developed at global, regional and country levels. Various studies on poverty alleviation in Eastern and Southern African countries, e.g. Uganda[1], have confirmed that provision of a safe water supply is among the highest priorities of poor people in rural areas to reduce their poverty. As a result, poverty alleviation programs in most African countries over the last 10 years have put water and sanitation at the top of the political agenda, and investment to the sector has increased significantly. Many development agencies (NGOs, bilateral, multilateral and financial institutions) have considered water and sanitation as an entry point for any poverty alleviation development program.

In many developing countries, particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa, decentralization policies are emerging intended to increase participation by rural communities in decision making and planning processes. Most governments have claimed to be facilitators and regulatory bodies, while the private sector and local institutions play active roles in implementation of water supply and sanitation programs.

Despite the favorable situation for the provision of rural water supply and sanitation facilities, the lack of a real management model to sustain the services has presented a challenge to the sector for the last two decades. There is a general understanding and acceptance in most African countries that a community managed rural water supply and sanitation system is one of the best sustainable management models. However, the different approaches and methodologies adopted by various actors to address the real issues on the ground and to scale up good practices have not always been successful.

Collaboration, networking, and partnership among actors in the sector, to learn from each other, to scale-up and have a bigger impact at all levels, is a phenomenon that has emerged over the last 10 years.

This paper will present the networking and learning experiences of Plan International in its Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Program, with specific reference to the case study of scaling-up water supply services in the Plan Program Areas of Geita District, Tanzania.

Networking and Partnership as a Strategic Direction of Plan International [2]

Plan International is one of the biggest and oldest international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Plan's vision is of a world in which 'children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity', in ways that 'achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries'. Plan's program approach is Child Centred Community Development – placing the needs and rights of children at the centre of community based development planning.

The formation of partnerships and strategic alliances is seen as important in promoting Child Centered Community Development, as the organization believes that effective solutions to

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[1] Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) conducted in 9 districts 1998-1999
[2] Adopted from Partnership & Strategic Alliances a Framework for Plan-CCCD, September 2003

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complex development problems cannot be solved by any single organization but require the efforts of many actors from different sectors. Partnerships and strategic alliances can also extend the reach and impact of programs, contribute to organizational capacity through the exchange of skills and expertise, and promote mutual learning. Therefore, Plan is committed to developing and maintaining an organizational culture that promotes and encourages both internal and external networking, to facilitate learning throughout the organization and among professionals in over 45 countries, across Africa, Asia and the Americas, in which Plan operates.

Plan recognises that there has been a fundamental change in addressing problems of economic and social development, as responsibility for this work has shifted to civil society[3] organisations and the private sector. Community-based organisations (CBOs), local and national organisations, and local governments, are increasingly assuming a stronger role and demanding greater responsibility in setting the directions and terms of development for their localities. Plan believes that partnerships are an important tool in strengthening the capacity of organisations to enable all people, especially people living in poverty, to claim their rights.

'Inter-organisational cooperation is a pillar of the emerging development paradigm that seeks to mobilise the values and voluntary energy of citizen's groups, the know-how and capital of business, and the legitimate authority of the state.' (Covey, Sept 2000)

2 Challenges in utilising the learning from networks and alliances

The new trend, by Plan and other actors, of learning from networks and alliances seems very encouraging in increasing the impact of the water supply and sanitation sector on poverty alleviation at all levels. However, the following challenges need to be considered to make the learning effective:

- The contribution of learning from networks and alliances to the development process needs to be analysed for effectiveness, and its impact on poverty alleviation of the target community has to be assessed.

- In most cases, the knowledge from networks and alliances remains with the members. There is a need to facilitate communication and dissemination of learning to a wider audience.

- There is a tendency to neglect community level learning and a failure to incorporate indigenous knowledge when adapting learning to local conditions.

- Sustaining the knowledge and learning from an on-going development process needs continuous knowledge management, planning and review of its impact.

- Attention needs to be given to issues of documentation and making knowledge accessible to all stakeholders, including the target community.

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[3] Use of the term in this paper reflects the understanding that membership organizations such as CBOs are a key part of civil society.

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3 Case Study

This is a case study in Geita District, Tanzania, in which it was attempted to address some of the identified challenges of learning from networks and alliances.

I) Geita Distinct

Geita is one of the 8 districts in Mwanza Region of Northern West Tanzania. It has a total population of 712,195 inhabitants of which 355,823 (49.9%) are male and 356,372 (50.1%) are female. The average annual population growth rate is 3.2% (Tanzania census 2002).
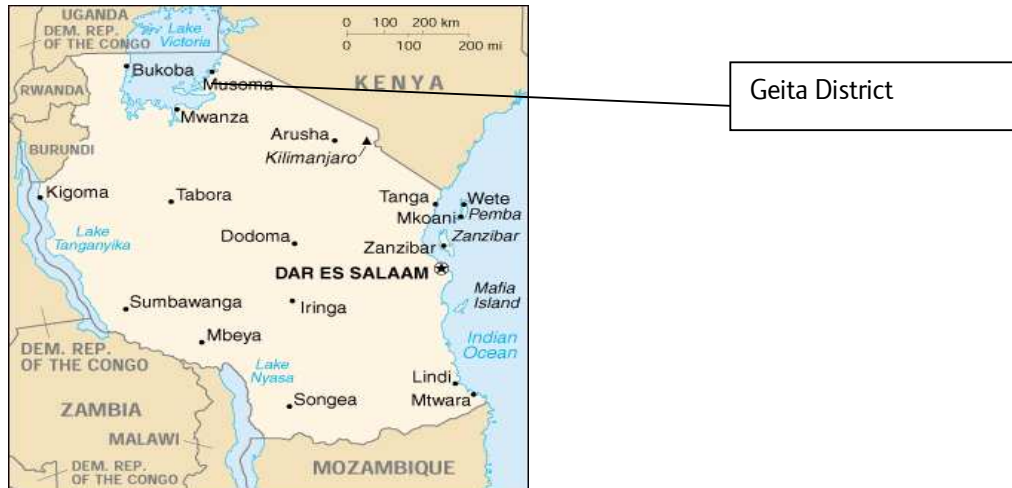
Geita is divided into 7 divisions, 33 wards and 185 registered villages. It has moderate weather with day temperatures between 15°C-30°C throughout the year. The average annual rainfall ranges between 800mm in the Southern part of the district to 1200mm in the Northern part.

Like most of the districts in Tanzania, it is difficult to access fresh and safe water in Geita. The 1991 National Water Policy set a goal of providing clean and safe water to the population within 400 meters of their households by the year 2002[4]. Despite the efforts of the government and other stakeholders, the safe water supply coverage in rural Tanzania, including Geita District, is less than 50%. Latrine coverage in Geita is below the national average

II) Initial situation in Geita District

Plan has been promoting water and sanitation activities in Geita District for the last 5 years, and they have formed part of its integrated Child Centered Community Development program since 2002. Plan, in partnership with the district administration and with the collaboration of other stakeholders, has managed to support 25 deep boreholes, 2 shallow wells and 1 rain harvesting scheme. Functioning water committees have been formed in all 28 of the participating communities, however, the water supply schemes are very small and they do not generate sufficient income to manage themselves. All boreholes, including one with high yield, were installed with low capacity hand pumps that can only serve small communities (maximum 200 households). Despite the collaboration with stakeholders and an effective partnership with

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[4] The revised Tanzania National Water Policy (2002)

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local government; as with many other rural water supply services in Africa, ensuring sustainability and increasing coverage to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) was a challenge in Geita.

III) Learning from Networking and Partnerships

In the last 5 years, the challenges to scale-up of rural water supply and sanitation services to achieve the sector MDG have become issues on the international agenda. A Global Thematic Group, of which Plan International is a member, was formed to provide strategic leadership and cross boarder learning for scaling-up of effective water and sanitation programs.

Plan, in collaboration with other members such as IRC, decided to conduct an Action Research on how to scale-up rural water supply and sanitation services in Asia and Africa. In the East and Southern Africa Region, Ethiopia and Tanzania were identified as the countries within which to start the Action Research. The first workshop was conducted in Ethiopia in April 2004. The Water and Sanitation Advisors from six Plan program countries (including Tanzania) and about 20 other organizations (including IRC) participated in the workshop.

The Program Manager of Plan in Geita was also invited to participate in the regional workshop, to help him understand the concept of scaling-up and to present the challenges in his program area. It is observed that his participation was important in having an impact directly on the water and sanitation program implementation activities in Geita District, a location that was selected for the following reasons:
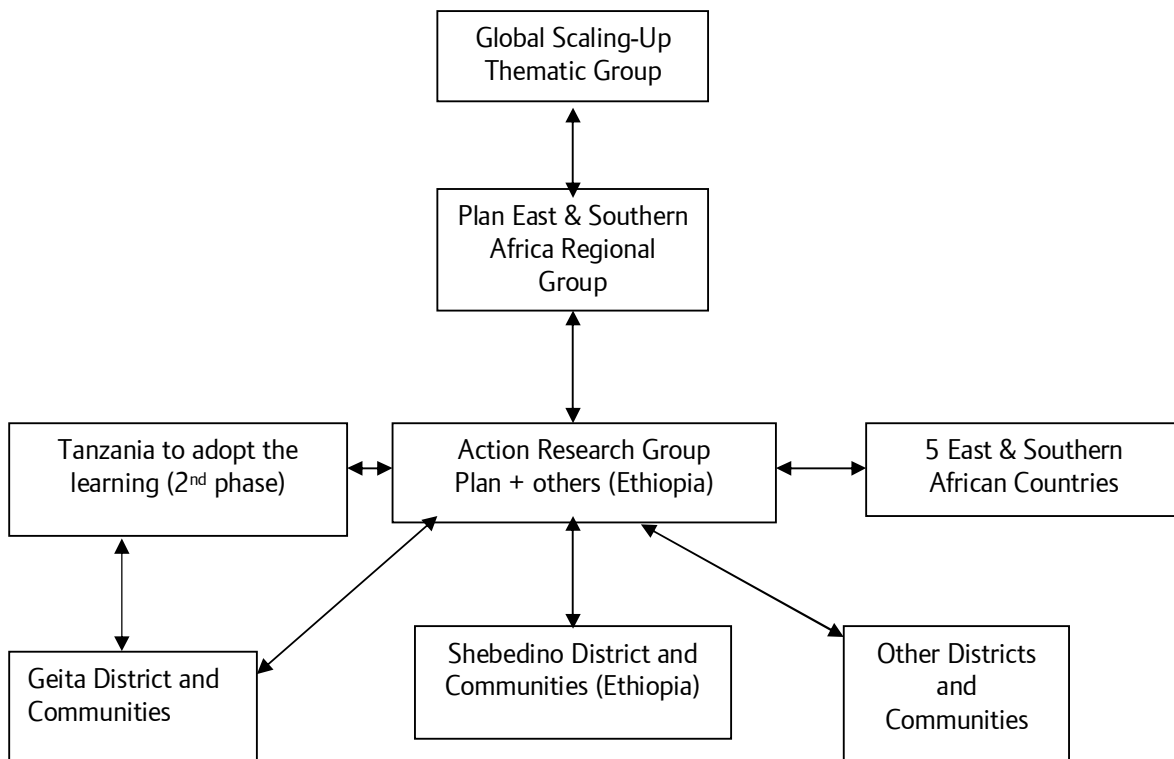
- The district had a well established development committee with the participation of all stakeholders, and Plan was an active member of the committee.
    - The district development committee, which is chaired by the District Commissioner conducts regular monthly meetings
    - All sector departments heads , development agencies and civil societies and private companies like the Gold Mine in the district are the members of the committee
    - The District Development Committee facilitates the formation of sector groups like the Water and Sanitation , Agriculture ...and etc subcommittees to promote innovative ideas in the sector.
- The Plan Geita frontline staff have been very successful in forming and strengthening active water committees and link them with the District WATSAN Group
- The response from the communities was very encouraging and Plan was in a favorable position to contribute to the dynamism in the District.

Communities in Geita demonstrate their ability to protect their water points.

- There was good will from both Plan staff and the district administration to learn and disseminate the scaling-up concept.
- There is well established Support Mechanism in Plan Tanzania to promote community and district initiatives and
- Plan Tanzania are the members of different forum in the Country to disseminate findings to the members of.
  - NGO Policy Forum- which coordinates NGOs that are active in policy dialog and learning
  - Sector Public Expenses Review Team: A team that helps the government on reviewing expenses with objectives and achievements
  - Technical Advisor Committee (TAC) : A group which was formed to help the government on technical issues

- Plan Tanzania is very much connected to the regional and global forums to disseminate the new findings and also to bring new ideas to augment the local initiatives. The following two ways learning model would elaborate the learning process from networks and partnership

A model for two ways learning from global to village level

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IV)   The impact of learning on scaling-up water supply services

On returning from the Scaling-Up Workshop, the Plan Geita Program Manager and Plan Tanzania Water and Sanitation Advisor shared the learning and concepts with District Development Committee and the Water and Sanitation Group, including local government and various CBOs and community members. Since then, two important changes have been observed in attitude and practice, both in Plan staff and district stakeholders including the local governments:

- **The understanding about concept of scaling-up the community managed system has increased**
- **Willingness to accept new management model has been evident**

a) The concept of scaling-up in Tambukareli village:

Among Plan supported water supply schemes, most boreholes had higher water quantities available than were being utilized, and therefore could support more people. Their benefit was being limited by the available hand pump technology, which Plan staff and other stakeholders used to think was the only sustainable model. Now they are learning that sustainability depends not only on technology but also on the institutional arrangements of the community and the necessary support of the government and other stakeholders. The communities have always requested higher discharge pumps and now the thinking for future planning is to use the available water sources to their optimum level by applying the appropriate technology and strengthening the institutional establishment at different levels.

A study has now been completed in Tambukareli village to install a submersible pump on a high yielding borehole, to supply more than 3,500 people, as opposed to the less than 800 people who benefited from the hand pumps. In 2005, it is intended to upgrade four more high yielding boreholes to motorized pumps, and to support the communities to ensure there are capable institutions to run the water supply services.

A high yielding borehole in Tambukareli Village with hand pump - children queue to get water**.**

b) A new management model in Shilabela village:

The Shilabela Village Water User Committees have introduced a new initiative to privatize their water supply service system. Small local service providers have started to take responsibility for a rural community water supply management system, while the Water User Committees ensure the quality of the services. It is an exciting new initiative with six months encouraging experience, that needs monitoring and documentation to support other communities to adopt the process.

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The Plan Geita Program uses the District Water and Sanitation forum to ensure the lessons learnt are disseminated and used by other stakeholders, including the local governments.

Plan Tanzania has been documenting these experiences to share them through the Plan Regional Water and Sanitation Network (with representatives drawn from ten countries in North, East & Southern Africa) and to the wider stakeholder in the region and locally.

The Plan Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa will support the Geita Program Manager to present the lessons learnt to the on going Scaling-up Action Research, and to bring further feedback to the Geita District stakeholders, as well as other actors at the country level.

4   Conclusions and Lessons Learnt

- It is important that learning at global, regional, country and district levels is synchronized to have real impact at the village level.
- Two-way communication, especially listening to the target communities, is an important tool for learning.
- For an effective development process, partnership and collaboration at all levels is essential, not optional.
- Networks and alliances, at all levels, need to have clear methodology and objectives to develop the capacity of poor people in developing countries to initiate and lead their development process and achieve positive and dynamic changes in their lives.