



POLICY INNOVATION TO ACCELERATE CHANGE

Moving WASH Advocacy Forward in 2016 and Beyond

Advocacy for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is a critical piece to achieving universal coverage of WASH services within the next 15 years. While WASH advocates face common challenges, such as barriers to translating evidence for policy or complicated political processes, there are several key ingredients to successful advocacy and ways that advocacy for WASH can move forward. Planning for advocacy, stakeholder mapping and analysis, communications and knowledge sharing, and funding are essential for WASH advocates to succeed. Moving forward, advocacy for WASH must be mainstreamed in the WASH sector and advocates must define advocacy differently, be innovative in their efforts, partner with the government, and work within existing government frameworks.

Policy Innovation to Accelerate Change

Moving WASH Advocacy Forward in 2016 and Beyond

WASH advocacy is a critical piece in achieving universal and sustainable coverage of WASH services for all. Globally, advocates for WASH pursue various objectives and use a wide variety of strategies, but there are common threads in terms of challenges, successes, and opportunities for moving WASH advocacy forward.

Advocacy for WASH in developed and developing countries has significantly increased in scope and breadth over the last several years, but gaps remain. Going forward, WASH advocates must move toward strategic and intentional planning for advocacy, collaboration among partners and countries, and determining specific and shared advocacy objectives.

A group of 17 WASH advocates representing nine countries gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, and online on August 21, 2015, for a day of knowledge sharing and discussions on advocacy for WASH in developing countries. The day included case studies, open discussions, and presentations on current and emerging practices.

This report explores the common themes that emerged from the meeting. The group had rich discussions on common challenges in both developing and developed countries, key ingredients to make advocates for WASH successful, what is needed to move WASH advocacy forward, and what changes advocates for WASH may need to make in their approach in order to ensure universal and sustainable

The objectives of the meeting in Stockholm were to:

1. Gather advocates working on political prioritization for WASH in their countries and share best and emerging or innovative practices
2. Demonstrate the importance of advocacy at all levels
3. Present developing country WASH advocates' successes, challenges, and discuss the role of small grants to implement civil society policy advocacy strategies
4. Discuss the importance of using data for advocacy at the national and local levels in developing countries and potential ways to fill data gaps
5. Explore effective ways to advocate for domestic resource mobilization and public finance
6. Discuss the future of WASH advocacy

coverage of WASH services for all is achieved.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Experience sharing shows that advocates for WASH come across common challenges and solutions in their work. Through exploring common challenges, advocates can collectively brainstorm and identify approaches to overcome those barriers to success in advocacy.

Evidence

In many cases, the available evidence for WASH is not translated from academic or technical language into the appropriate messages for advocacy. This may be because most evidence is intended for academic research or to demonstrate success for additional funding but is not intended for policy purposes. This information

Presentation of Evidence

Those who influence and brief Ministers of Finance want information packaged in such a way that it will matter to the Minister and be easy to convey. The information provided to these individuals should be presented through tailored material that is modular and written in the type of language that the targets will understand and respond to.

needs to be packaged in such a way that policy makers can easily understand the evidence and its potential impact on policies.

Evidence should be presented in a way that clearly illustrates the WASH context while also clearly presenting the ‘ask.’¹

Sometimes, advocates for WASH do not have the evidence necessary to support the policy or change they are pursuing. In this case, more research is needed to provide the

data and analysis that decision makers will need to create or act on a policy, or increase budget lines. Partnerships with stakeholders in academia, among others, are important to ensure evidence is available, verified and reliable.

In many countries, there is inadequate prioritization of WASH at the top levels of government. This can be due to many factors, including too many competing priorities or a disconnect between the community level situation and national level priorities. In many cases, the needs of citizens don’t always trickle up to the decision makers. Advocates have an important role to play in making sure policy and decision makers have all the necessary and appropriate information. Clear presentation of evidence, including the WASH context in countries and communities, in appropriate and meaningful ways is a necessary piece of WASH advocacy.

¹ An ‘ask’ is the specific request of a policy or decision maker by advocates that will result in achieving the advocacy goal.

Evidence should be presented in ways that are attractive and make sense for the target audience, including the form of presentation, timing, and platform.

Political Processes

Governments and political processes are complicated, country-specific, and not always understood in civil society. Advocates must familiarize themselves with the political processes of the decision maker and organization they are trying to influence. In most countries, campaign and election years may mean a need to change advocacy strategies, which also creates a challenge for advocates. Policy and budget decisions in many countries take many years to reach, meaning that the impact and success of advocacy are not easily seen in the short-term, and a variety of strategies may be necessary.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Advocacy goals and objectives vary depending on the country context, political situation, and specific gaps in WASH-related policies, budgets, etc. Advocacy messaging and activities are also context specific but commonalities exist in strategy planning. In addition to these, a number of “key ingredients” emerged as common threads throughout the discussions in Stockholm.

Key Ingredients

- Funding
- Planning for advocacy
- Stakeholder mapping and analysis
- Communications and knowledge sharing

- **Funding** is the foundation for enabling WASH advocacy. Advocacy should be written into every grant or contract for international development as a key piece of the strategy for improving and sustaining WASH services. In many cases, it may be necessary to change the phrasing of advocacy efforts in order to make advocacy more palatable to donors, especially with developed country governments. Some advocates have used “partnerships” and “influencing” to describe advocacy work. Any funding for advocacy must be channeled so that the money goes to the appropriate conversations and messages that will create the most impact.²
- **Planning for advocacy** ensures that advocacy is done in a strategic, rather than ad-hoc, way. Many stakeholders advocate for WASH as part of their programming efforts but it is often ad hoc and done as needed. Specific policy or budget advocacy is not frequently planned out and few organizations have an advocacy strategy along with dedicated staff to execute the strategy.

² This discussion was based on a donor-aid model. As the WASH sector shifts away from this model, governments will begin to lead in WASH service provision and the funding structure for advocacy will change.

Advocacy is most effective when it follows a strategic and intentional plan, in the same way that programs, services, and interventions are planned.

- **Stakeholder mapping and analysis** is a useful tool in choosing targets, building alliances, and shaping messages. Mapping helps identify the decision makers to target and allies who can support advocacy efforts. Analysis helps determine the influence and interest or support of the advocacy objective of each stakeholder. In addition to knowing the allies on an issue, it is important to know why opponents of the issue do not support it, and their levels of influence, authority, and power.
- **Communications and knowledge sharing** is essential to learn from other advocates and improve strategies. Sharing best practices and what has not worked within and between countries is a useful way to connect advocates for brainstorming, learning and sharing, and potential partnerships. Partnering with and learning from other sectors that have been successful in advocacy can also be useful in learning new strategies and refining approaches to WASH advocacy. In addition, advocacy is more powerful when multiple partners speak with one voice and use shared messages. This creates a unified approach and requires coordination among advocates to agree on specific ‘asks.’

In Practice: KWAHO in Kenya

In Kenya it has been found that there is a large economic loss due to lack of WASH—about USD \$5,420,000 is spent annually on health in areas where sanitation is bad. An important aspect of Kenya’s approach to WASH involves the devolution of government, which allows for equitable sharing of national and local resources throughout Kenya. Because of the devolution, each county is required to have a Water Bill. Often, citizens are not aware of acts that have been passed, so there has been a push to make more people—both citizens and other stakeholders—aware of WASH issues. Kenya Water for Health Organisation (KWAHO) has held WASH Dialogue Forums to inform people of their right to WASH, and encourages citizens to engage their political leaders in budget planning and policy formulation and implementation. There is also a movement to build the capacity of the county government officers when it comes to WASH standards and inclusion of equitable access to WASH, using the county’s resources as well as funding from conditional transfers. Thanks to the WASH Dialogue Forums and media campaigns for advocacy, budget allocations for WASH increased in three counties in the 2015-2016 fiscal year: Kajiado by 5%, Elgeyo Marakwet by 10%, and Bungoma by 8%.

MOVING WASH ADVOCACY FORWARD

Given the importance of WASH advocacy for achieving the goals of universal and sustainable coverage of WASH services, advocacy for WASH must become strategic, intentional, and innovative to support these efforts.

Advocacy Mainstreaming

A common thread throughout the discussions was mainstreaming advocacy within the WASH sector. Advocacy is a key piece of making the WASH sector successful and ensuring sustainable WASH services in developing countries. Any WASH program must work with the public sector to ensure that sustainable WASH services are provided to all communities in the long-term. There is little chance of achieving the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals for WASH by 2030 without the public sector. Therefore, advocacy for WASH will only become increasingly important in the coming years.

To ensure WASH is on the political agenda, advocacy should be prioritized with resources and staff in all countries and in all programs. There should be full-time or part-time, paid positions for advocacy roles. With dedicated advocacy staff, organizations can accomplish much more in terms of government engagement and influencing policies and budgets.

Advocacy staff will allow much more capacity to translate evidence into appropriate and influential messaging and to build relationships and have consistent meetings with government officials to ensure that WASH remains a top priority. Building advocacy into all programs is a critical component to increasing political prioritization of WASH and ensuring that sustainable WASH services are provided to all.

Examples of Mainstreaming Advocacy

- All grants and contracts for WASH programs include an advocacy component and role
- Advocacy is included in proposals for WASH programs
- Policy and decision makers are engaged by practitioners prior to the launch of a program or infrastructure.

Defining Advocacy Differently

Reaching universal coverage of WASH and sustainable services will require a variety of advocacy targets, messages, and practices. WASH advocacy requires much more than campaigning and raising public awareness. While these are useful, advocacy for WASH also takes slow, patient work in mapping stakeholders, building

champions, compiling and translating evidence, and presenting the advocacy case to policy and decision makers.

Advocates should also think outside of the box in terms of advocacy targets. Many national-level advocacy efforts target the Ministry of Water, but Ministers of Finance are the ones who make decisions regarding the national budget. It is also important to consider what level of government is the right level to target. When working with the national government, advocates frequently target the ministerial level, but should consider whether there may be more impact in targeting the political or executive levels of government. Some advocacy objectives require subnational advocacy efforts, as well, in engaging the local or district governments for policy or budget changes.

WASH advocates should be innovative in the way WASH is pitched to advocacy targets and what the specific ‘asks’ are. Historically, advocates have used evidence on the impact of WASH on health in persuading decision makers to prioritize WASH. While this has been successful in many cases, advocates must pitch WASH in more than just health terms in order to influence other targets. WASH also has economic and other impacts that could be used in advocacy messaging. International development is continuing to recognize the importance of multi-sectoral approaches to solving global and local problems. Advocacy in this space must do the same; as WASH is foundational to so many other areas of international development, WASH advocates should engage in collective advocacy with their counterparts in health, nutrition, education, and other development efforts.

In Practice: Aligning with the Ministry of Finance

In 2008, the government of Ghana promised additional finance for rural WASH. In response, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) began a process of pulling a program proposal together, prequalifying contractors, and lining everything up. This process took months to complete. Once the proposal was finalized, the CWSA brought it to the Ministry of Finance, but it was declined. The Ministry of Finance indicated the promise of additional finance had been for months ago, and were disappointed to see that the CWSA “lacked the absorptive capacity” for it. This case shows the importance of common understanding of budget processes and communication between stakeholders.

Work within the Government Framework

WASH advocates must also begin engaging government partners as allies as well as targets. Government partners can be very powerful advocates within their own

government systems and are critical for increasing the political will necessary to achieve WASH advocacy goals.

Civil society frequently lacks understanding of government structures and political processes. It is the advocates' job to help both civil society and government allies understand how to work within the systems that already exist. Capacity building on how to approach government from outside or within is a need in all countries.

Budget Advocacy

WASH advocacy for many years has focused almost entirely on topline budgeting for WASH. Moving forward to sustainable WASH services, advocates must sometimes take different tactics, including focusing on *how* that money is spent and *where* it is targeted in order to achieve the goals of universal and sustainable WASH services. Some advocates have focused on increasing the entire budget, whether foreign assistance or developing country budgets, in order to increase the WASH portion of that budget. Others have focused on messaging around the true cost of WASH services in order to garner support and realistic expectations for WASH programs. Still more have focused on smarter spending of the existing budget so that more return on the investment in WASH is possible.

In Practice: IRC in Uganda

IRC is working with Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network (UWASNET) to convince the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development to increase budget allocations for operation and maintenance (O&M) of rural water facilities from 13 to 15 percent by February 2016. They work to put pressure on districts to focus on O&M and place WASH issues high on the parliamentary agenda, increase advocacy funding, and create more partnerships. This strategy is comprised of multiple advocacy activities, including action research, individual meetings with Members of Parliament, national dialogues, educational materials such as policy briefs, and capacity building of civil society to use social accountability approaches in advocacy. So far, IRC has worked in 38 out of 111 districts to present their case and correct misperceptions about O&M. IRC and UWASNET have engaged multiple partners in Uganda, including government through the Uganda Parliamentary WASH Forum. They have found that both organizations have both technical and advocacy expertise, which has contributed to their success thus far, as well as good communication between the organizations and to policy makers.

THE FUTURE OF WASH ADVOCACY

Momentum for WASH advocacy is growing stronger in developing and developed countries. With the new Sustainable Development Goal for universal access to water and sanitation for all, advocacy for WASH will take on more importance and must become more strategic. Advocates will have to use innovative strategies and expand their reach through new objectives, targets, partners, messages, and approaches.

While each country and community will have different needs that require advocacy over the coming 15 years, there are common processes and objectives that will move WASH advocacy forward. As advocacy becomes more intentional and strategic, advocates will have to begin planning for advocacy, conducting stakeholder analyses and mapping, engaging other advocates in communications and knowledge sharing, and seeking innovative sources of funding.

Advocacy will have to be institutionalized within the WASH sector to achieve the common goal of universal coverage of services. These advocacy efforts must take a wide variety of approaches in addition to traditional campaigning. Policy and decision makers at various levels of government and in a wide range of Ministries must be targeted, and the advocacy 'asks' must focus not only on increasing budgets for WASH, but also smarter spending of the WASH budgets in addition to other policy 'asks.'

With more strategic and focused advocacy in the WASH sector, it will be possible to achieve sustainable coverage of WASH services for all. Strategic advocacy at all levels - global, regional, national, and local - will play an important role in supporting governments and the WASH sector to achieve these goals.

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