

OCCASIONAL PAPER 3

AACES* AND PARTNER BASELINE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

(* AUSTRALIA AFRICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEME)



OXFAM

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Children gather to learn how to wash their hands at a Save the Children KZN supported creche in Umzinto, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AACES	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ADC	Aiding Dramatic Change in Development	PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	SDT	Socio-Drama Topography
ECD	Early Childhood Development	TB	Tuberculosis
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	TU	Tholulwazi Uzivikele
MDIC	Maputaland Development and Information Centre	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES), which was funded through Oxfam Australia in 2011, focuses on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and public health in Zambia and South Africa. The overall goal of the program is to improve the health and quality of life of the poor and vulnerable in targeted areas of the two Southern African countries.

The objectives of the program are:

1. Increased access to, and effective use of, improved integrated and sustainable water supplies and WASH services;
2. Reduced WASH-related inequalities in gender and vulnerable groups;
3. Strengthened capacity of stakeholders to manage and implement WASH programs on a sustainable basis;
4. Improved WASH governance and effectiveness; and
5. The documentation and sharing of learning that informs policy, public engagement and program development and growth.

This case study documents the community participation and planning process of AACES in South Africa. During the research interviews were conducted with four of five Oxfam partners that are implementing the program; some members of their beneficiary communities; staff from Lima Rural Development – the consultancy that facilitated the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) baseline for AACES – and Oxfam staff members. In addition, a brief literature review on community participation was conducted. The author also observed four community participation sessions – one with each of the partners – during which different techniques were used to facilitate community consultations. This case study captures these diverse methods and provides the reflections and voices of the partners and individuals from the communities in which the partners work.



NOTES



2 THE AUSTRALIA AFRICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEME (AACES)

The AACES program design is centred on the use of a rights-based approach to ensure access to WASH services for poor and vulnerable people. This approach is in line with the United Nations resolution that recognises people's rights to clean, safe water and sanitation. The design process involved drawing expertise from consultations at different levels, and experiences from communities and other key stakeholders, including lessons from other countries, such as Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. These learnings were imperative in the design process, planning and implementation at different phases.

In Zambia the implementation of the program built on Oxfam's existing experience in implementing WASH programs. In South Africa the program is implemented through existing Oxfam partners that had previously been working in communities on projects that focused on different aspects including food security, HIV and child social protection.

Five partners, who were new to implementing WASH-related activities, initially piloted the implementation of AACES in South Africa.

It is Oxfam Australia's intention that the process and experiences be carefully documented for learning and sharing, particularly in order to inform a subsequent roll out of the program should this be feasible.

This case study supports that intention and documents the community participation and planning of AACES with four of the five implementing partners in South Africa.



3 IMPLEMENTATION OF AACES

The five partners selected to implement AACES operate in four district municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. They are:

- **Woza Moya**, which is based in Sisonke District and works with communities to address HIV prevention, treatment care and support, and stigma and discrimination;
- **Save the Children KZN**, which is located in eThekweni Municipality and Ugu District, and supports early childhood development (ECD) centres to meet requirements for legal status and recognition;
- **Fancy Stitch** in Umkhanyakude District supports the livelihoods of people affected with HIV and AIDS through income generating creative art activities and other food security initiatives;
- **Tholulwazi Uzivikele (TU)**, which is based in Umkhanyakude District, and focuses on food security for people affected by TB and HIV and supports youth development and ECD;
- **Maputland Development and Information Centre (MDIC)** is also located in Umkhanyakude District and focuses on social facilitation. (The case study of the MDIC process will be available when work on it is completed.)

THE PROCESS

The AACES WASH program was developed on the basis that activities would be integrated into the existing work of the South African partners. During the design and planning of AACES, the use of participatory methodology was emphasised by Oxfam Australia to ensure that plans were developed with the full participation and consultation of the target communities in which the partner organisations worked.

The methodology, which was adopted for gathering baseline data in relation to WASH in the relevant communities, is known as the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and is explained in more detail below. This process was facilitated by independent consultants, Lima Rural Development.

Following the baseline process, partners entered a pilot implementation phase. This involved implementing projects funded by Oxfam Australia through the AACES fund. The initial pilot phase was for six months.



NOTES

4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

Community participation falls under the broader theme of participatory development, which became a buzz word in development in the 1970s. It is based on the view that people who are targeted for development have something to offer – in terms of local knowledge, experience and their own capacity – with regard to the development and implementation of projects.

There are many approaches to participatory development and these have evolved over the years. However, the fundamental principles remain the same. They can be traced back to the work of Paulo Frere and the literacy revolution, where the fundamental principles of people-centeredness and recognition of people's knowledge and experiences became more entrenched in conversations about development. Approaches to development saw processes become more facilitative and collaborative, and there was mutual responsibility rather than the imposition of "outside" expert knowledge and ideas.

The central idea is that development initiatives should not be separated from realities at a grassroots level (more information is available in the article "Farmer-back-to-Farmer: A Model for Generating Acceptable Agricultural Technology", which was published in *Agricultural Administration* in 1982). Community consultation or participation provides an opportunity for these realities to be captured. Community participation involves various tools in a process that enables communities to be involved in initiatives that directly or indirectly affect them.

THE PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL

The PRA evolved from the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), a method that involved researchers using participatory tools to extract data to answer specific research questions. The development of the RRA was based on anthropological methods like ethnography, but it recognised that researchers do not have the time required by ethnography to gather information. As a result, the RRA, which was a rapid, but more participatory method of enquiry, was developed. This later evolved to the PRA, which is more action-oriented research. The PRA is regarded as an approach to development that recognises rural people's ability to articulate, analyse and plan their own development (as outlined in *Learning to Share Experiences and Reflections on PRA and Community Participation*, which was published in 1997).

Like most participatory approaches, the PRA acknowledges local knowledge and skill and uses tools that stimulate discussion among people in a community. The fundamental thinking in PRA is that communities are able to clearly identify issues that affect them, and, therefore, can develop context-specific interventions to address those issues. When communities – a term that is used loosely to describe people living in the same geographical area and governed by similar norms and values – lead a process, they own it, which increases the likelihood of success and sustainability in the short, medium and long term.

PRA was initially developed for rural contexts, but has been used in more urban settings and for different purposes by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government bodies, universities and research institutions around the world (for more information see the 1997 publication *Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the First Last*). Essentially a method of social enquiry or an action research method, according to its original design, the use of PRA has brought about significant results.

For the AACES project in South Africa, the PRA methodology was chosen as the best way to equip partners and communities with the necessary tools for engagement, as well as to align ongoing activities to the proposed WASH intervention.



5 THE AACES BASELINE PROCESS

After adopting PRA as a preferred methodology, Oxfam Australia contracted Lima Rural Development, an organisation that has expertise in working with PRA, to facilitate the baseline process. From the Oxfam Australia perspective it was deemed necessary for specific WASH-related PRA studies to be undertaken to align the perceived community needs and expectations with those of the partners and communities and with the AACES outcomes.

As part of this process Lima facilitated a two-day participatory session with each of the four partners covered in this case study, as well as with members of the communities in which they work, to create a snapshot of the WASH issues affecting the communities. Due to time limitations, Lima gathered initial information by communicating telephonically with each of the partners. The consultants later arranged for face to face sessions to be held with the partners and communities. Lima representatives asked each partner to mobilise at least 40 community members to participate in the PRA baseline process.

Given the task at hand, time limitations and distances between partners, Lima staff members chose appropriate PRA tools, such as Venn diagrams, community resource mapping, focus group discussions and transect walks, to address the challenges posed by the partners and communities. It was envisaged that through these tools, partners and communities would still be allowed enough time to fully participate and contribute to the proposed WASH intervention.

The sessions consisted largely of focus group discussions, during which the specific PRA tools were used, as well as key informant interviews. The purpose of the sessions was to establish the baseline on the state of WASH, including the WASH resources in the relevant areas of operation and how the resources were being used, managed and protected.

5.1 REFLECTIONS ON THE BASELINE PROCESS

CONTENT OF THE BASELINE DATA

Lima's reflection on the baseline was that useful data was obtained from the different communities regarding the status of WASH resources and services, including the broader challenges faced by members of the community regarding WASH.

Partners found the information beneficial for providing an overall picture and data that was subsequently used in different ways to inform planning for further community engagements.

Some partners used the information obtained during the baseline process as a checklist against data that they had obtained previously, or as a reference when lobbying or engaging with government stakeholders at a later stage.

It became apparent during this process that it was necessary for partners to understand WASH as being concerned with more than just infrastructure development. As a result, the AACES outcomes focused primarily on WASH-related community engagement processes and empowerment, on supporting government structures and on holding those structures accountable, as well as learning from exchanges between various role players.

It took time and exposure for all Oxfam partners to understand that whilst access to water and sanitation may require some facilities, at times it requires government to respond accordingly. In addition, the PRA process, which was time limited and did not allow for a very deep analysis of connections, was designed to open space for discussions and to explore linkages between existing activities and the proposed WASH intervention, as well as between issues such as general hygiene, health and WASH.

The PRA process also brought key stakeholders together to reflect on challenges and possible solutions and gave members of the community the opportunity to express and discuss their reality with relevant authorities and the supporting partner.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Lima consultants were of the view that the consultative sessions were generally useful and gave communities an opportunity to interact and reflect on their own experiences about the history of water and sanitation in the respective areas. Some members of the community, particularly young people, were able to learn from others about the history of WASH in the community.

The time to engage with partners during this initial phase was limited. In retrospect, the Lima PRA consultations should have been done earlier in the design phase. However, when the usefulness of a WASH specific and documented baseline was identified, other participatory processes were used in the lead up to the actual PRA exercises. These included telephonic discussions with partners.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Lima staff members noted that in all the sessions they facilitated people were quick to identify challenges relating to water and sanitation, but not hygiene. It was only through probing and further discussions that people identified and clearly articulated the hygiene-related issues in the community.

CONSTRAINTS

Lima staff had originally conceived conducting a three-day process with each of the partners. However, due to constraints each session lasted two days and Lima had to carefully select tools that would allow for rapid social engagement, while broadly capturing the main issues.

Although some of the tools that Lima used for this process were similar, it was noted that the outcomes varied with each community. The use of different tools depended partly on the context in which the partner works. For example, Save the Children KZN works in a more urban environment which required a different approach to partners working in a rural area. In addition, Lima triangulated the various tools and used information gathered during the transect walk to obtain a more comprehensive situational analysis.

As mentioned previously, there were time constraints during this PRA process. Partners stated that a broader spectrum of issues could have been covered if additional time had been allocated for the baseline data collection aspect of this program. Partner organisations also found that the insufficient time to prepare for the PRA process impacted on their ability to fully mobilise communities and key stakeholders ahead of the sessions.

In addition, the baseline process was conducted in November and December and some partners found that communities and organisations were already engaged in end of year activities which made it difficult to mobilise communities as well as encourage full participation in the exercise.





5.2 LESSONS LEARNED

The context in which each partner works is different and therefore any interaction with the community would have to cater for these differences and processes need to be adjusted accordingly. Although a variety of tools were used for different partners, there was a general sense from partner organisations that preliminary consultations with their staff members would have enabled Lima to better adapt the process to specifically suit each partner's community profile. This would allow for the exploration of opportunities for integration with the existing work of partners in the community. This aspect is focused on the need for partners to be properly engaged to understand the tools so that they can prepare communities accordingly, instead of only being notified of the intention to use the PRA method. This information may also be shared through information sharing on participatory methodologies.



6 THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

While the baseline process was still underway, partners were required to develop plans for pilot WASH projects that would last for six months. The plans were largely informed by partners' prior knowledge of WASH issues in the community because the baseline process, and report thereof, was not complete at the time the plans were sourced. The baseline information was, however, subsequently available during the implementation process. As a result, the partner's WASH interventions, as well as annual operational plans, were able to be informed by the consolidated PRA process that involved all stakeholders.

The next section of this case study outlines each organisation, the WASH project undertaken by that partner and reflections on the process.

6.1 WOZA MOYA

6.1.1 THE ORGANISATION

Woza Moya has worked in the Ufafa community for 13 years and has a close working relationship with the community at a very local level through community health workers who work with households on issues relating to HIV.

This is regarded as the partner's main strength because it provides Woza Moya with an eye into the community on an ongoing basis. It enables the organisation to receive regular information about the burning issues of the community through the daily experiences of the community workers and provides an opportunity for Woza Moya to share information with members of the community.

As part of the AACES program Woza Moya implemented a community household survey, produced videos relating to WASH and conducted a community dialogue. This multi-method approach took into account that water and sanitation was a new program area and that Woza Moya staff had not thought intently about how WASH related to their other activities.

They also expressed a need to deepen their understanding about what community members thought and felt around WASH and how they dealt with the lack of services and resources.

6.1.2 AACES ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

To obtain a detailed informative picture about WASH in the area in which Woza Moya operates, the organisation conducted a household survey. Data was collected from 275 households in the Ufafa Valley by Woza Moya care workers, who understood the structure and layout of the community, as well as the Woza Moya program, and had easy access into the community.

WASH VIDEOS

Using funding from Oxfam, youth received training that built on and sharpened previously obtained skills in film-making and obtained technical training from a mentor twice a month. The AACES project provided an opportunity for the youth to use their skills to further develop what they had learned. In addition, Woza Moya recognised that videos are a powerful tool that can be shared broadly and that the filming of the videos provided an opportunity to be out in the community.

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Local community members access water from the community pump in rural KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

The program team initially outlined what they wanted to capture and the media team developed a script which was discussed and agreed upon. Capturing the footage involved shooting specific experiences of individuals and groups of people in real life settings.

Once the filming was complete, the footage was screened for the team to give input, providing feedback for the youth to use when editing and finalising the videos.

The result was five videos on WASH: one on the PRA process; another on disability, water and sanitation; the third on protecting water sources by removing litter, cleaning up and removing alien vegetation; another on broken infrastructure that needed repairs and lack of capacity and skill to repair equipment; and the fifth was on community dialogue. At the time of this research a sixth video documenting people who leave their homes in the early hours of the morning to go to water sources and their daily experiences around water and sanitation, was being finalised.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

As part of AACES, Woza Moya drew on its previous experience of conducting a community dialogue that focused on children's rights and held a similar event on WASH, which was part of a water day celebration. This dialogue gave community members an opportunity to come together and learn from one another with the purpose of enabling people to find a voice and to improve solidarity in the community.

To launch the process, the Woza Moya team held a brainstorming session to identify the sectors to be represented at the dialogue. These were identified as the following: the community (including community leadership), the youth (including schools), other NGOs working in the Ufafa area and government departments. Invitations were sent out to these stakeholders using different media, including fax and email, via care workers, in the form of notices delivered to schools, to the traditional leadership and through word of mouth.

The positive response from the community and stakeholders was evident in the turn out on the day of the dialogue. The process involved presenting the findings of Woza Moya's household survey, as well as Lima's baseline findings, after which participants were given an opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the presentations. Breakaway sessions gave participants, who were divided into stakeholder groups, the opportunity to discuss their role in response to the WASH issues presented. This input was subsequently discussed in the broader forum. Woza Moya also clarified the role of the partner organisation in the program, given available capacity and resources.

Participants involved in the dialogue felt that they were involved as owners in a process, were driving the outcomes of initiatives and were being supported to protect their own resources. One community member stated that people felt "in these meetings, things can get clarified about why things have not worked before and how to prevent the same mistakes in the future".

The consensus at the dialogue was for the establishment of water committees to take responsibility for managing water sources. Furthermore, participants were of the view that committee members should be trained in some technical aspects of WASH so that they are better able to maintain the resources in the community.





6.1.3 REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The community dialogue was empowering in that it provided an opportunity for community members to hear and listen to one another in a single forum which enabled them to identify common issues. As people felt able to open up and share their views, it was clear that “people are not happy with services delivery issues”, according to a Woza Moya staff member.

With its structured format, the community dialogue was a successful community engagement tool because it focused the discussion so that key issues were addressed.

The value of this process was evident in Woza Moya’s intention to hold another community dialogue on WASH a year after the one mentioned above. It was anticipated that by the time the second discussion is held the WASH committee structures (see Community Participation below) would be established and able to handle what came out of the second dialogue process.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Setting up WASH committees was a priority outcome from the dialogue, but Woza Moya acknowledged that it was crucial that processes were followed in this regard to ensure the committee members did not have political interests and that the most vulnerable members of the community were fully represented. As a result it is anticipated that it will take some time for the committees to be established.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Woza Moya staff did not expect the level of vocalisation about WASH issues by the youth that emerged during the community dialogue. The organisation had anticipated that women, especially those who offer home based care to sick people, would be the most outspoken about WASH. However, the youth, who were from all ten areas of Ufafa, spoke about WASH committees and voiced their anger at the lack of services in the community. As a result the dialogue created an opportunity to build activism among youth around a fundamental development issue. Through this process Woza Moya realised the importance of including the youth in future aspects of the project.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

The need for technical training emerged during the dialogue as people stated that they did not know how to repair WASH resources and did not want to rely on outsiders because, in the words of one participant, “they never come”.

Drawing from a previous Oxfam learning event where information was shared about women in Kenya who were doing repairs themselves, Woza Moya decided to train four community health workers in the first year as part of a pilot in order to learn how they could roll out the project to other community members.

The development of the videos provided the media team with an opportunity to develop their skills, but it was noted that they need to further build their capacity with regard to skills such as script writing and storytelling and relating to some technical aspects.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RELATING TO WASH

Woza Moya identified the need to obtain additional information regarding WASH in the Ufafa community. As a result, it was decided that a survey on WASH would be conducted in the eleven schools in the valley.

The sense of increased awareness around WASH issues was evident in the area in which Woza Moya works when the local choir sang a humorous song about water and sanitation at a subsequent Youth Day event.

REVIEW AND CLARIFICATION OF OWN ROLE

Woza Moya found the outcomes of the initial AACES program overwhelming as staff members were unclear as to what direction their WASH initiatives should take. There were so many requests from the community and, although they tried to assert their role, Woza Moya staff needed to manage how they dealt with the community response which was “way too much too soon”, in the words of the Woza Moya director. As a result there was a need to reconvene as an organisation and think about how the program could proceed.

ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

A challenge expressed by Woza Moya related to the difficulties in engaging with the local municipality about water and sanitation, which are basic human rights and fundamental to people’s wellbeing, livelihoods and health. Woza Moya regarded the municipality as vital partners and planned to continue to look at more vigorous ways of engagement, although there had been a complete lack of response to previous approaches.

6.2 SAVE THE CHILDREN KZN

6.2.1 THE ORGANISATION

Save the Children KZN works with crèches in different areas, but the organisation’s focus for WASH is in Umzinto and Wentworth. The partner’s role is to support the crèches and build the capacity of staff members so they improve services and are able to meet the registration requirements of the Department of Social Development. This allows a crèche to be recognised as an ECD service provider and makes it eligible for grants from the government. As Save the Children’s focus is on capacity development for community service entities, rather than on community development, the community within which the partner works is more diverse than is the case with other partners involved in AACES.

Save the Children’s community has three sectors:

- the crèche community, which consists of teachers and children,
- the different stakeholders that work with crèches, including NGOs and relevant government departments and
- the parents of the children who attend the crèches.

Save the Children interacts and works directly with the first and second groups and indirectly with the parents, who in turn interact directly with the community.

As part of the ACCES program, Save the Children KZN conducted a community survey and stakeholder workshops and conducted monitoring visits at crèches regarding WASH.

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6.2.2 AACES ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY SURVEY

After completing the baseline, Save the Children started this project by administering a two-page questionnaire to identify the *status quo* of WASH resources in Wentworth and Umzinto. The organisation subsequently designed a comprehensive seven-page questionnaire that aimed to ascertain the level of functioning of WASH resources and other more detailed health requirements that are required by government at crèche level.

The questionnaires were administered by an independent researcher, who is also a qualified retired nurse, in Wentworth and by Save the Children in Umzinto.

Based on an approach called Basic Management by Objectives, which drives the work of the organisation, the purpose of the survey was to get the facts, build up additional information from there and develop an implementation plan.

Save the Children found that the survey provided accurate quantitative data that identified the needs within the crèche community. In particular, the infrastructure needs relating to WASH are great. Most crèches, especially those in Umzinto, are under-resourced and do not have adequate WASH facilities.

Due to budget constraints, and not being able to justify providing infrastructure for one crèche rather than all of those in need, Save the Children focused on acting as a facilitator to link relevant stakeholders with crèches to assist in obtaining the necessary resources.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

To ensure community participation in the AACES program, Save the Children targeted stakeholders within each of the above sectors. Prior to this program, the partner organisation already interacted with ECD centres through local area based crèche forums at which issues affecting the crèches on an ongoing basis are discussed. Save the Children facilitated WASH discussions with two local area forums that represented crèches in Wentworth and Umzinto. This enabled discussions to start at a grassroots level during the process, including during implementation when WASH was on the agenda of the monthly crèche forum meetings that involved 44 crèches.

To engage with stakeholders, Save the Children organised specific meetings that involved crèche representatives, government and other relevant stakeholders. The stakeholders were identified as a result of having previously attended crèche forums, or having been referred to Save the Children by other stakeholders. Three stakeholder meetings were held in both Wentworth and Umzinto.

In targeting families and the broader community, Save the Children made use of media articles to disseminate information and crèches shared information at parent meetings.

In Wentworth government stakeholders responded positively to the invitation to attend Save the Children's meetings and subsequently showed their commitment to support the process. Representatives included the relevant departments from eThekweni Municipality and some provincial government representatives.

There was a poor response from government stakeholders to attend the meetings in Umzinto, but the crèches were well represented at all the stakeholder meetings.



Save the Children KZN engaging around the AACES WASH Program with the community in Umzinto.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam



Save the Children presented an overview of the WASH program at the first stakeholder meeting. This included providing a *status quo* report of WASH in the crèches in both areas. During a discussion facilitated by Save the Children, stakeholders were given an opportunity to share their areas of expertise and their views on how best they could support WASH initiatives.

During the Wentworth meeting there was an opportunity to discuss areas of collaboration and support and different stakeholders were able to openly share their views about the project. One of the stakeholders raised questions around sustainability of projects and proposed that this project should pave a way for a process in which “civil society engages with government in a prolonged and sustainable project”.

6.2.3 REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The positive response in Wentworth was attributed to the good relationship that has built over time between the crèche forum and the eThekweni Municipality which services the Wentworth area.

While stakeholder response was very slow in Umzinto, other organisations working in the area report similar experiences. NGOs reported that councillors are supportive, but not influential within the community and it is difficult to get buy in from government stakeholders.

There was ongoing communication, including phone calls, faxes and emails, from Save the Children to get stakeholders to participate in the process. It required much persistence to get government representatives to simply attend the stakeholder meeting.

ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Save the Children’s focus for the AACES project has been on facilitating the linkages between relevant stakeholders and the crèches and building capacity of the crèches to lobby relevant stakeholders.

During the stakeholder meetings, various representatives from the eThekweni Municipality shared information on different WASH-related initiatives that the municipality was undertaking to which the AACES project could be aligned. The Department of Health was particularly excited that Save the Children was looking at WASH within the crèche community. They commented that “it had been ignored for a long time”, as reported by a representative of Save the Children.

It became apparent that others would get involved once someone started a process. This was evident in Wentworth where a local government office assisted with cleaning at one of the crèches as part of Nelson Mandela day. In addition, a local business that had read about WASH in local Wentworth publications assisted by providing paint. A representative from the Department of Social Development also stated at a stakeholder meeting that the department had begun to recognise that home play centres are not going away and that the government have to find a way to support them.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RELATING TO WASH

There was a general positive response from the members of the crèche forum in Umzinto, even though there was a poor turnout by government stakeholders. The community

members who participated in the process felt that it was useful for sharing experience and knowledge and one person interviewed said she “learnt a lot” from the process. Hygiene was identified during these processes as one of the challenges relating to WASH.

However, raising awareness through this process had a positive impact and is regarded as having influenced behaviour with crèches focusing increasingly on hygiene and cleanliness and implementing good hygiene practices that the staff had learned through the WASH processes. These included finding ways to dispose of disposable nappies, rather than sending soiled nappies home with the children, as well as improving the cleanliness of the child care facilities.

A clinic sister in Umzinto also added input into an assessment tool that can be used to monitor the health and hygiene standards at the crèches and to give support.

However, Save the Children found that WASH is a big and complex issue involving many aspects that are linked to one another. These include health-related matters, nutrition and water.

REVIEW AND CLARIFICATION OF OWN ROLE

From an organisational point of view, WASH had not been a primary focus of Save the Children in the past. This meant that the organisation had to re-focus on what could be delivered given the capacity of staff members. As a result, the organisation’s objective in this regard is about changing attitudes through participation, which will lead to a change in behaviour, which will eventually result in a change in standards for crèches that will allow them to apply for conditional registration.

In addition, being unable to provide infrastructure, which was the greatest need emerging from the crèche community, Save the Children recognised that its role was as a facilitator in linking relevant stakeholders with crèches.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

The AACES initiatives have been limited to two crèche forums and these forums are a good channel for the information as they are well organised and easy to mobilise. Other crèche forums also want to get involved, but are unable to do so at the present time due to limited resources. They do, however, receive information through a crèche forum association, which serves as an umbrella structure for crèche forums.

There was a general positive response from the members of the crèche forums in Umzinto. However, the response from government stakeholders was poor. Nevertheless, during the consultative meeting the crèche community and Save the Children were able to communicate their expectations and outline the envisaged process.

6.3 FANCY STITCH

6.3.1 THE ORGANISATION

Fancy Stitch has worked with different communities in the Ingwavuma area on HIV and food security for many years. Previous work involved the installation of water tanks for water harvesting for one of the community gardens in the area. Fancy Stitch’s work builds on the organisations own experience of working with the community. The main focus of the work is food security in the context of HIV and so WASH becomes an important component in strengthening food security, and, more specifically, vegetable garden projects.





Community meeting in Ingwavuma, Northern KwaZulu-Natal around the AACES WASH Program at Fancy Stitch.

PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

6.3.2 AACES ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Fancy Stitch held public meetings with the three communities – Mambuzikazi, Kwelelani and Machobeni – that they had planned to work with as part of the AACES program.

About 50 people attended an initial meeting for the Mambuzikazi and Kwelelani communities. The two communities fall under one Induna, who, as is common practice, facilitated the meeting. Fancy Stitch staff members, who were already aware that a wind pump in the area was not working, asked members of the community to explain, from their own experiences, what is happening with regard to WASH in the community. The community explained the difficulties they were experiencing in accessing water since the wind pump had broken and that the municipality had not undertaken any repairs.

Fancy Stitch staff members asked participants to discuss how they wanted to resolve the problems being faced by the community. Following these discussions and brainstorming, the community came up with different ideas, which included putting up a steel shed and fixing the wind pump. After an explanation from Fancy Stich regarding the costs of the proposed options, the community members were asked to think about what actions they could afford to take if they worked together with Fancy Stitch.

The community proposed that it provided the labour for the wind pump to be fixed – this would require the digging of a 2.5km pipeline – and Fancy Stitch agreed to obtain funding to buy the necessary material.

The need for a committee to oversee this work in the community was also discussed during the meeting. A WASH committee was subsequently selected at a second community meeting. Members of the community included a young woman, a disabled woman, three men and the Induna.

Fancy Stitch followed the same process in Machobeni and, while people said they had problems accessing water, they were not very clear about their specific constraints, the condition of the water sources and what they wanted to prioritise. As a result Fancy Stitch felt the community members did not understand exactly the extent of the problem in Machobeni. Following two similar meetings community members, including a women's group, were able to better articulate their specific water needs. They decided they wanted a trench to be built and that there was a spring that needed to be protected.

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

In Machobeni one of the groups of women that Fancy Stitch works with wanted a steel shelter for harvesting rain water so as to grow vegetables in winter. They got to know about the success of the steel shelter in Esihlangweni (another community where Fancy Stitch works with a women's group). They asked Fancy Stitch to convene a community meeting to discuss the water needs. Fancy Stitch advertised the meeting through putting posters up at all public areas and invited council representatives. This was advertised as an open public meeting.

Holding community meetings is the normal practice in these communities when there are issues that affect the community as a whole. There have been ongoing community meetings since the start of the WASH activities in all these communities.





THE WAY FORWARD

Future plans include providing water harvesting infrastructure and some sanitation infrastructure. There are also plans for protecting water sources and repairing others. In addition, plans are in place for Fancy Stitch to provide support and technical training to the committees that oversee WASH in these communities and increase access to WASH services, including the provision of more water tanks.

6.3.3 REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The community responded positively to the engagements by Fancy Stitch and set up committees that were running well at the time of this research. Women had leading roles in the committees and gender dynamics were well managed. The committee articulated the needs of the community and reached consensus on how resources should be spent. The committee also defined what role the community would play and members felt they could take decisions about what should be achieved in the community. However, linked to this, the committee was also aware of its limitations and clear about the role of Fancy Stitch in the project.

The engagement between the community and Fancy Stitch continued throughout the project, together with the ongoing identification of community needs. Community committees also continued to take responsibility to be able to manage their own activities and rely less on Fancy Stitch. An example of this is the commitment from the community to dig the trench.

The processes of bringing people together in meetings really strengthened community relations, according to one community member who said "our community was disintegrated and this has helped in bringing our people together".

Participants reported that they were able to propose solutions at the meetings. For example, most women mentioned the dangers they face when going alone to fetch water from the rivers. As a result, community members proposed at the meetings to make arrangements for the women to go in teams. The meetings ensured that, in the words of one community member, "no one would be left out". A disabled lady who lives alone was identified to receive a suitable toilet on her property.

Some members of the community saw the value of people mobilising themselves to do something about their own problems and the meetings inspired them to take initiative. Another community member commented that putting in hard work themselves will ensure that people look after the resources because they will always remember that it was "their sweat and time".

Fancy Stitch acknowledges that community participation is crucial as there is much valuable input that can be missed if communities are not consulted. At the same time it is important to note that communities differ, some are more homogenous than others and it is important to be open about a process.

Processes of community participation require protocol to be observed. Initiatives can be hindered if these protocol issues are not managed properly.

In the implementation stage, another aspect that was found to be crucial is the even disbursement of resources within community groups in order to minimise conflict. For example, the water tanks envisaged for the women's group have to be shared with the community to ensure that other's benefit from the resources.

ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Taking the initiative resulted in interaction between the community and the municipality after an official insisted that the community was not authorised to fix the wind pump. The community had been requesting for a long time that the municipality fix the pump and had received no response. After discussions the municipality admitted fault and allowed the community to continue. This shows the commitment by the community in owning the process.

The need for political dynamics to be strategically managed at open community meetings was expressed with regard to the Fancy Stitch initiatives. This is because politically interested people may seek opportunities to divert the focus of a meeting.

REVIEW AND CLARIFICATION OF OWN ROLE

With regard to delivering infrastructure, Fancy Stitch emphasised the importance of being open from the start of discussions about the ways the organisation might be able to assist and the aspects with which it might not be able to help.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RELATING TO WASH

The need for more detailed information regarding WASH resources and practices in the community became evident during the AACES project. Information that was shared at open meetings was mostly of a very general nature and people were vague about details at times. As a result, Fancy Stitch staff identified a need to conduct a household survey.

6.4 THOLULWAZI UZIVIKELE

6.4.1 THE ORGANISATION

Tholulwazi Uzivikele (TU) works with 48 villages that are dispersed across the broader Manguzi area. The organisation's focus is broad, but integrated around HIV, and orphans and vulnerable children. The entire community within which TU works is very big and experiences of WASH resources and services are similar in some aspects, but different in others.

6.4.2 AACES ACTIVITIES

FORUM DRAMA

Following the baseline, which was conducted in one of the 48 villages, TU's main focus was on raising community awareness on WASH issues. This involved incorporating drama, which has been the organisation's main methodology used in the past.

TU made use of a technique called socio-drama topography (SDT), which was developed by a Canadian organisation called Aiding Dramatic Change in Development (ADC). TU's relationship with ADC dates back to 2007 when TU's staff members were trained as part of a program that focused on forum drama for youth with the objective of effecting behaviour change in relation to HIV and AIDS.





For the AACES program, ADC worked with TU staff to develop a new process, using the same methodology, to engage with the community. The focus was on the attitudes of people to facilitate a process where people would embrace change with regard to WASH issues. While the previous work using the methodology focused on youth, the new initiative involved adapting activities and a high level of facilitation. It proved to be a more robust way to achieve the level of engagement they wanted, but did require investment in the facilitation of the method. The new design was initially tested and assessed by community volunteers before it was facilitated with the community.

To implement the initiative, TU selected five villages, which were fairly representative of the type of communities in which the organisation works, and planned three-day workshops, with a fourth day for follow up subsequent to the initial workshops. The five villages each experienced one of the following features: a protected wetland, an unprotected wetland, shallow water, municipal water supply and a low water supply.

The community entry was facilitated by first meeting with the local traditional authority. TU staff explained the purpose of the workshop and clarified that it was not related to the provision of services. The Induna then invited the whole community to a meeting at which 35 people were recruited through an invitation to those who were willing to participate and who had an interest in discussing water and sanitation-related issues that affected their community. In all the workshops it was mostly women who participated. This could be because the women were more eager to participate as a result of them often carrying the burden in relation to water issues.

The first day of the workshop focused on the social presence of people, or where people find themselves, with the aim of building a sense of inclusion. It included the facilitation of non-verbal dialogue exercises, which connected participants to each other, and focused on re-conditioning people through the removal of social barriers.

On the second day participants plotted details about the local area and explored issues relating to water challenges using a large community map. The third day was about people telling stories of their own experiences in groups and presenting these in drama to the other participants. This method uses the theory of play therapy, but in this case for adults. It essentially involved people dramatising their experiences of accessing WASH in their communities through acting out different scenarios from their daily lives.

Two weeks later the same group from TU returned to the community for the fourth day, which gave participants the opportunity to reflect on what they had learned and develop internal and external solutions.

6.4.3 REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Members of the community who participated in the process felt that they learned a lot from these processes. This included learning about their community and being able to identify with others in the community when they realised, as mentioned by one community member, that they “are not alone” in experiencing difficulty accessing water.

During one session, which was observed for the writing of this publication, people were enthusiastic, open to the process and felt that the workshop was a nice way of learning and sharing their experiences, particularly as they related their struggles in accessing water.



Local women washing their clothes in water carried in water storage drums from sources in the area.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam



Participants said they were “learning a lot” about their community. They reflected on the SDT workshop as an opportunity to think about the community’s history with regard to water and sanitation. The process also helped them realise the impact of water access issues and that they did not know the broader village very well, with most people only knowing the areas next to where they live.

THE USE OF FORUM DRAMA

The use of the forum theatre method in which people re-lived their daily experiences and struggles of water access and lack of sanitation resources was regarded as valuable as it enabled TU to get firsthand experience and understanding of the struggles within the community.

It was observed that people found the process very enjoyable and a fun experience. Although the level of illiteracy amongst participants was high, this aspect was not exposed during the workshops and TU avoided the effective process of engagement being hindered as a result. The SDT method enabled members of the community to participate freely and share their knowledge in a non-threatening way.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RELATING TO WASH

With regard to research data, it was apparent that further focus is needed on this aspect. The baseline was conducted in just one village and captured a broad picture, without the specific details pertinent to individual villages.

In addition, using the SDT method meant that people’s experiences were documented through the recording of pictures and maps, rather than research data, which would have had other uses.

Nevertheless it was evident that the process created a significant awareness on water and sanitation issues.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

TU found the six month timeframe provided by Oxfam Australia was too short for the implementation of this project. The process of community engagement can be a lengthy one because it starts from the point of negotiation with community leaders at the beginning of the process and should conclude with a follow through to ensure implementation.

In addition, the AACES project focused on providing a platform for people to talk about their own experiences, to propose solutions and identify who should take responsibility for implementation. As a result, TU staff expressed the need for the organisation to revisit the community to assess whether implementation of internal solutions had taken place.

ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

It was evident during this process that there is a limitation as to the WASH resources and services TU can deliver on its own. As a result, TU intended to work closely with MDIC (the organisation that is part of the AACES initiative, but not included in this report) on engaging municipal structures because of the difficulties faced in building these relationships.



7 OVERARCHING LEARNING THEMES

In conclusion, there are five overarching themes that can be identified and are explained in this section.

7.1 THE BASELINE AND TOOLS USED

Conceptualising the WASH components and their linkages was not easy for many of the staff members involved in this project. The WASH concept was viewed as new by some, and some found it difficult to view WASH as a sanitation and hygiene issue, not just as a water issue. An initial WASH awareness raising workshop, facilitated by Oxfam, highlighted WASH linkages, but the PRA process sought to open the debate further, bring common understanding to partners and stakeholders and to align activities of the selected AACES partners.

The use of a combination of PRA tools for the baseline was certainly valuable in that it enabled the communities to tell their own stories and to reflect on their own history in relation to WASH. It also brought together people from different generations who were given the opportunity to interact and learn from each other. For example, younger people were able to learn more about the history of their area through timelines. Given the constraints regarding conceptualising WASH in the context of partner's programs, prior discussions between Lima and each individual partner would have facilitated the process of aligning and finding synergies across programs. This could have also assisted in Lima's process to adapt according to each of the partners' needs.

7.2 CONTEXT SPECIFIC PROCESSES

Each of the partner's community contexts is different and therefore any interaction with the community would have to cater for these context-specific differences and each process would need to be adjusted accordingly. There is a general sense that preliminary consultation with partners and getting an agreement on the process for each partner would have enabled Lima to adapt the process to ensure that it would suit each partner's community profile. This would allow for the exploration of opportunities for integration with partner organisation's existing work in the community.

7.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND MOBILISATION

Community participation is a continuous process of engaging with the communities concerned and there is no single way to engage with the community. The use of different methods by the partners to encourage people within communities to participate bears witness to this fact. Community participation has been used to understand the problems facing communities regarding WASH through allowing communities to define these, propose and plan how these can be addressed, formulate responses and discuss roles of different stakeholders and key role players in delivering the responses.

The case study has also demonstrated that there is no single formula for community mobilisation as each community is different and some partners are dealing with a 'variety of communities' operating at different levels.

Community participation is not without challenges and it has been demonstrated in the case study how these become lessons for future engagement and planning.





A Fancy Stitch staff member explains that water security is a major issue in rural communities.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

7.4 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation process has, to a great extent, been informed by what has come out of the community participatory processes. This does not mean that partners have sought to respond to all of the issues that were raised by the communities. However, the organisations have been realistic about their capacity to implement and manage the wider program that WASH initiatives became during the AACES process.

Partners generally have a sense of what they would like to do regarding WASH. Some of this is not specifically to do with technical aspects and infrastructure, although most communities have articulated these specific needs. However, there are constraints regarding partner's capacity to deliver at this scale.

Some partners have been able to clarify their role as more of a facilitative one in linking the community with other relevant government stakeholders in terms of service provision related to water and sanitation issues. However, it has not been adequately captured how this process would be monitored and what objectives the partners, who have chosen this route, have set for themselves. There is room to reflect on the issues that have not featured in the proposal documents moving forward, but have been raised as a priority during the community discussions.

7.5 LEARNING ABOUT WASH

The AACES projects as they have focused on WASH have provided an opportunity for partners to learn, share and try new ways of programming. The involvement of Lima and other partners, such as ADC, has brought in external expertise and therefore new learning into the program. Some of these opportunities for learning have been maximised while others have been very minimal. The time factor plays a very important role as it can limit what can be achieved.

In the initial stages of AACES it is evident that time constraints have tended to somewhat constrain the process to a certain extent. There are sometimes trade-offs between time and quality of results and most of these processes are time consuming and therefore sufficient time should be factored in planning to allow for evolution of processes.

Another area of learning relates to the integration of WASH into existing programming. This aspect needs to be considered in future.





8 CONCLUSION

The AACES WASH program has been positively received by a wide variety of stakeholders, including partners and the communities they serve. There are valuable lessons that can assist in the design and programming moving forward. Partners are better aware of their own capabilities and what they can deliver in the next phases of the program. Some positive relationships have been built and it is important for these to be sustained, others are yet to be built and it will take consistent effort by all partners to see these coming into fruition.



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NOTES





Harvesting and storing water in water tanks is a common practice in Umzinto.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

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