

# Learning note:

## The Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES)



OXFAM

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### background

The Oxfam Community Led Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program, implemented in targeted communities in Zambia and South Africa, focused on community-based interventions across the sectors of water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and maternal and child health. Implemented over five years, from 2011 to 2016, the program was funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), through the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES).

The program provided an opportunity for linked programming and learning towards positive, sustainable change in the lives of people living in poverty.

### AACES Objectives and Focus

The broad aim of the partnership was that marginalised people have sustainable access to the services they require.

The AACES objectives are as follows:

1. Marginalised people have sustainable access to the services they require
2. Australian aid policy and programs in Africa are strengthened particularly in their ability to target and serve the needs of poor and vulnerable groups<sup>1</sup>
3. Increase the opportunity for the Australian public to be informed about development issues in Africa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This objective was reworded after the Mid-term Review due to changes in Australian aid policy.

<sup>2</sup> This objective was removed after the Mid-term Review due to changes in Australian aid policy.

The Oxfam goal was to improve the health and quality of life of the poor and vulnerable in targeted areas of Zambia and South Africa. Within this goal, there are five Oxfam objectives:

1. Increased access to and the effective use of improved, integrated and sustainable water supplies, sanitation and hygiene services
2. Reduced WASH-related inequalities in the delivery of services to women and vulnerable groups in the target areas
3. Strengthened capacity of stakeholders to manage and implement WASH programs on a sustained basis
4. Improved WASH governance and effectiveness
5. Documenting and sharing the learning that informs policy, public engagement and program development and growth.

Part of the focus of this program was on processes of empowerment, mentoring and developing strong and well-functioning structures and institutions at community level through partnerships with civil society organisations and relevant government structures.

## Implementing Partners and Partnerships

Oxfam worked with organisations in South Africa and Zambia to implement the program. These partners, in turn, worked directly with community structures and members in the targeted areas. In both Zambia and South Africa the partners worked with government agencies, such as local authorities or municipalities.

The implementing partners were as follows:

Partner	Country	Core approach	AACES WASH approach
Fancy Stitch (until end of year 2)	South Africa	Sustainable food security through income generation for women	Water harvesting for women's vegetable garden projects. School-based improvements to accessing WASH education. Increasing access and improved WASH services at household level.
Keepers Zambia Foundation	Zambia	Sustainable livelihoods	Development of community structures to respond to WASH and training of women in construction.

Partner	Country	Core approach	AACES WASH approach
LIMA Rural Development Foundation	South Africa	Rural development, including food security	Community development of vegetable gardening. Design of toilets for children at crèches.
Maputoland Development and Information Centre ( until end of year 2)	South Africa	Facilitating development interventions, including food security	Water harvesting at schools. Improving access to water and sanitation.
OneVoice South Africa	South Africa	Engagement with young people on HIV, AIDS and TB	Development and implementation of secondary school WASH material as part of the life skills curriculum. Promoting WASH management and menstruation management in secondary schools.
People's Participation Services	Zambia	Sustainable livelihoods	Development of community structures to be responsible for their development and respond to WASH challenges.
Save the Children KZN	South Africa	Child protection through increasing capacity of early childhood development (ECD) centres to meet norms and standards for registration	Implementation of WASH materials for ECD sector. Capacity building of ECD District Forum to improve governance and management of ECD.
Tholulwazi Uzivikele	South Africa	Community empowerment and HIV and AIDS	Training staff and learners at schools and crèches on WASH. Empowering community members to be WASH ambassadors. Facilitating capacity building of Water Users Associations.

Partner	Country	Core approach	AACES WASH approach
Village Water Zambia	Zambia	Provision and supply of water and sanitation	Drilling boreholes, constructing latrines, innovation and building local business enterprises.
Woza Moya	South Africa	Providing a holistic HIV and AIDS program	Implementing WASH crèche materials in the Woza Moya crèche. Water harvesting at schools and engaging youth. WASH demonstration site. Building capacity of community care workers to respond to WASH.
Young Women Christian Association	Zambia	Gender justice and sustainable livelihoods	Empowering community members, particularly women, to participate effectively in decision-making and combating gender-based violence and child abuse.

Organisations and individuals were also contracted to provide technical assistance and capacity building to support and deepen implementation practice. In South Africa, these were:

- Community Based Rehabilitation Education and Training (CREATE), which focused on disability-inclusion,
- Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE) curriculum development support for WASH materials in different sectors,
- Equal Education (EE), which focused on advocacy within schools, and
- Resources Aimed at Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) which focused on child social protection.

In Zambia, these were:

- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which focused on anti-gender-based violence campaigns,
- Zambia Federation of Disability Organisation (ZAFOD), which focused on disability, and
- Zambia Police on Child Protection which focused on child protection issues.

*Key learning: The inclusion of disability in the program provided an opportunity and learning curve and encouraged inclusive practice, rather than just focusing on policies.*

## Mutual learning and benefits

TREE provided technical input to develop program material for children through crèches and ECD practitioners. They shared this and built the capacity of WASH partners, but also took it further within their accredited training. As a result, WASH was integrated into all aspects of TREE's work and will continue beyond the program.

*Key learning: When organisations are contracted to provide capacity building to other partners, learning often works both ways.*

## Supporting partners to institutionalise and socialise a child protection policy

Capacity building was provided by four organisations to support and deepen implementation practice during this program. Among those organisations was Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN), which supported partners to institutionalise and socialise a child protection policy.

Instead of merely asking partners to comply with a pre-existing DFAT child protection policy, Oxfam in South Africa decided, in keeping with their supportive mode of engagement with partners, to develop a process with child rights organisation RAPCAN to work with partners on the concept and practice of child protection.

RAPCAN developed a method for supporting development organisations to understand the importance of child protection and the importance of good governance from a rights-based, or child safeguarding, approach.

## Leadership

RAPCAN worked with the leaders of organisations to consider the effect of child safeguarding policies on the culture and practice of their organisations. These leadership discussions took the form of appreciative inquiry which encouraged the RAPCAN and leaders of Oxfam partner organisations to understand the opportunities and challenges of implementing child safeguarding policies and practice within organisations.

*Key learning: Organisational leaders are the embodiment of an organisation's culture and ethos. Leaders have the power to influence an organisation and champion a child rights approach in the organisation they lead.*

## Policy institutionalisation

Having a code of conduct recorded on paper is often the first step for organisations in demonstrating a child safeguarding commitment. However, this is useless and inauthentic if the commitment is not alive within the culture of the organisation.

The approach of RAPCAN is that the culture of an organisation, including a child safeguarding ethos, is socialised with staff and then documented into a policy.

*Key learning: Developing a code of conduct is a simple way to embed the commitment to child safeguarding into the culture of an organisation. For compliance purposes, socialising this code of conduct with staff in a bottom-up approach is preferred. A code of conduct must be linked to a broader human resources policy that captures sanctions for unacceptable behaviour and the process for addressing those behaviours. A positive approach is for the leader and managers to model behaviour that demonstrates a commitment to child safeguarding.*

## Complying with donor requirements for safeguarding

Oxfam's requirement regarding child safeguarding compliance emanated from the requirement of their back donor for partners to sign a pre-formatted child safeguarding policy. However, the Oxfam team in South Africa realised this top-down requirement contradicted their approach to a working relationship with their partners. During initial engagement with partners around the child safeguarding policy, RAPCAN staff felt as if they were coercing partners in a technocratic approach.

RAPCAN then changed its approach, starting with visits to partners to build trust between RAPCAN's leader and the leaders of the organisations, and for RAPCAN to gain insight into the context of the organisation and their activities.

Oxfam team members also participated in some experiential workshops as part of their staff training process.

*Key learning: Child safeguarding compliance that only responds to the requirement of a donor will not necessarily embed the 'do no harm' orientation required from a child safeguarding commitment. RAPCAN prefers a more experiential socialisation and buy-in process.*

### *The journey with Tholulwazi Uzivekele*

*"RAPCAN and TU have engaged site visits in Cape Town and KwaNgwanase. The leaders have exchanged many views on email and WhatsApp to learn from each other's approach to development. The management personnel have had opportunities to engage each other on a child rights approach to governance...TU tells the story of how they always think of RAPCAN when taking pictures of children for donor purposes. They have taken a picture where children received toothbrushes but all turned away from the camera protecting their identity but holding their toothbrushes in the air."*

## Organisational culture

The experiential method used by RAPCAN allowed the facilitator to create a process for participants to journey in and out of their childhood and build a bridge from the adult's inner child to the employer in an organisation concerned about child safeguarding. This process included an activity where staff accepted the responsibility of being a child protection agent.

## Merging gender and child safeguarding

Four Oxfam partners – Women on Farms, Triangle Project, The Inner Circle and Rape Crisis – focused on different aspects of promoting gender equality and ending exploitation of people who are discriminated against based on their gender. The primary target group for all these organisations was adults, but through sessions with RAPCAN they discovered various ways they interact with people under the age of 18.

*Key learning: Gender and children's rights are not separate and the combination of promoting gender and child rights results in the deepening of a human rights culture in a society.*

## Impact

After engaging with Oxfam and 30 development organisations, significant shifts towards a child rights approach to governance were made by a few organisations.

## Program Strategies and Approach

Through this program, Oxfam focused on strategies to achieve sustainable access to water and sanitation by building the capacity of communities to facilitate sustainable WASH outcomes themselves. This required that WASH be seen in an integrated way; an interrelated set of public and relational health issues with long-term development implications.

Adopting this perspective to community-based WASH interventions – rather than the considerably simpler direct delivery of water and sanitation infrastructure – meant that success of the Oxfam approach rested on the ability of the community to engage with power relations within all spheres and at all levels of society.

This approach required communities to:

- engage with their internalised perception of their own power, rights and responsibilities;
- take up initiative and leadership around their own development;
- constructively engage with duty-bearers and public structures accountable for the delivery of services; and
- engage with their own localised distribution of power within households, neighbourhoods and districts to address inclusion, equitable access and protection of the vulnerable.

## Program Results

The results highlight the reach of the program and the depth of the changes to lives of participants. There has been an increase in people accessing and effectively using water, hygiene and sanitation services. There has been strengthened capacity of communities and duty-bearers to engage in the management of appropriate hygiene and sanitation delivery and activities in communities. Among the beneficiaries are households, villages, crèches and schools. The participation of individuals and collective groups facilitated the reduction of WASH-related inequalities in the provision of services to marginalised people. Community members have become aware of their rights and the responsibilities of different stakeholders and community structures have begun to hold duty-bearers accountable for these responsibilities.

Initial efforts to engage with duty-bearers, particularly elected local ward councillors and local authorities was exceedingly difficult, but there seemed to have been a shift over the last two years. Partners, through the developmental approaches underpinning their activities and the successes of their systemic activities, appear to be making significant inroads into a collaborative engagement with duty-bearers who have a direct responsibility for WASH activities in the sites where they are working.

*Key learning: The engagement with duty-bearers has a dual effect of increasing the voice and participation of communities in community-led sanitation and broader development. It also increases the capacity of stakeholders to respond to community challenges.*

In summary, the Oxfam WASH program activities had the following direct results:

- 46,668 people in South Africa and Zambia have accessed sustainable and safe water (54% female and 46% male)
- 27,019 people have access to appropriate sanitation (50.3% female and 49.7% male)
- 835 people with disabilities have access to WASH and other services
- Over 4,600 locations have hand washing facilities
- An additional 36 universally-accessible hand washing facilities are available in South Africa and 22 in Zambia

It is evident that the WASH activities conducted by partners in both countries made a significant contribution to the health outcomes of individuals, families and the community. Interviews and focus groups indicate:

- increased awareness of hygiene and improved sanitation practices;
- change in knowledge related to health seeking behaviours and how this awareness has influenced households and school settings;
- knowledge about the importance of accessible and clean water for learners;
- reduction in diseases such as diarrhoea through improved hand washing and access to facilities (such as tippy taps) and improved management of household utensils, reduced malaria as water is not lying around, use of latrines rather than the open bush;
- improved environment through management of rubbish and having latrines.

*Key learning: Water, sanitation and hygiene play a central role in enabling individuals and communities to take control of their own development.*

In addition to improvements in health outcomes being noted in crèches in South Africa, children were taking the messages and practices to their homes, resulting in improved hygiene practices at the household level.



## Save the Children

Save the Children implemented the WASH program, with AACES funding, through the Wentworth Early Childhood Development Forum (WECDF). The program sought to address issues affecting the health and development of young children resulting from a lack of awareness, non-existent or inappropriate infrastructure and poor service delivery. The program focused on children as agents for change.

ECD practitioners were provided with what they needed to create a clean and hygienic learning environment. They taught the message of good WASH behaviours in the ECD environment. Children took what they learned into the home and ultimately into the community.

The simplicity of the WASH program is that it starts with washing hands – something most children do anyway because they love to play with water. By teaching a child to wash his or her hands properly and frequently with soap, illness is reduced, and, as a result, more days are spent at the ECD service learning, rather than at home, recovering from being sick.

Children were engaged in educational activities that were fun, with catchy songs and silly dances. They were hooked, held each other accountable, and took the concept home.

Ensuring the WASH message leaves the classroom and enters the community is a crucial component of the program, and this is certainly done when the message bearers are small children. Practitioners shared stories of parents and carers who had commented that their children reminded the family to wash their hands before cooking, after going to the toilet and before meals.

With the provision of WASH guidelines, policies and training sessions, practitioners find it easy to keep on top of what is required – they now know what needs to be done and have put measures in place to attain the hygiene standards required.

As a result of the program, most practitioners found the number of children who are absent, specifically over winter, dropped. They attributed this to the washing of hands and surfaces and ensuring contact with bodily fluids associated with colds and influenza was limited. Immune systems seem to be strong as a result, with less time spent away from the ECD service when sick. Healthier children, practitioners and family members was the key outcome.

Key learning: When practitioners see the benefits of WASH, they continue to keep up the WASH standards even though it takes time and effort. They don't foresee themselves giving up on WASH, and are focused on finding strategies to ensure it doesn't fade away and that training and implementation continue.

The focus on WASH and improved health outcomes contributed to a focus on and increase in sustainable livelihoods and increased economic empowerment for women. In Zambia, for example, establishing and working with savings groups provided an opportunity to build capacity to respond to WASH and enhance health-seeking behaviours, to start savings schemes and small businesses, and access funding.

## The Program in Practice

This program demonstrated flexibility, adaptability and innovation in responding to community needs and program objectives. The flexible approach, which allowed for annual planning processes that responded to learning from the previous year was one of the most powerful elements of AACES that ensured participation in decision-making by different stakeholders. Key shifts occurred over the duration of the program, contributing to the successful achievement of the Oxfam AACES WASH project goal of ensuring marginalised people have sustainable access to the services they required. These shifts (such as bringing on key stakeholders into the program) were levers that were instrumental in bringing about changes, or conscious decisions that were taken at points in the program management and implementation practice.

*Key learning: The flexibility of this approach, though risky, gave genuine participation and ownership of the process to the partners and community members.*

### Innovation

As an innovative program, Oxfam's approach was for partners to integrate WASH into their existing work, rather than establish a separate WASH program. The program shifted away from the traditional WASH approach of exclusively focusing on service delivery to focusing on enabling individuals and communities to take control of their own development using WASH as an entry point.

Tippy taps were developed to provide cost-effective, accessible and manageable hand washing facilities. These are easy to build using accessible and affordable materials; accessible to people of all ages and abilities and easy to maintain.

Training women in construction skills in Zambia was not directly about WASH, but reduced gender inequalities within the program, challenged stereotypes of women, presented alternative role models to girls and boys and generated transformative debates on gender justice, especially regarding power, roles and responsibilities of men and women.

Manual drilling was found as an alternate approach to the use of expensive drilling equipment. It resulted in the creation of local business enterprises in manual drilling which

created employment opportunities and retained capacity and investments within the area to ensure sustainability of outcomes.

A design for child-friendly toilets is being built and tested to provide accessible toilets for children and to enable crèches to meet the norms and standards for registration.

Water harvesting is being used to increase access to hygiene and health as schools recognise the benefits of rain harvesting and the use of the technology spreads.

Different stakeholders are given the unique opportunity to meet through the ECD Forum, which engages communities and duty-bearers. The establishment of the forum has enabled a partnership between crèches, local government, business, churches, donors and civil society organisations.

Gender-based violence was addressed through the 'men as champions' in Zambia where men, including traditional leaders, were trained to raise awareness of gender-based violence, address issues proactively and report incidents of gender-based violence.

*Key learning: The increased sensitisation of men towards gender-based violence, through focusing on positive role-modelling, contributes to the shifting of behaviour.*

## Key Shifts in Thinking

With a focus on people-centred development, the traditional programmatic thinking of WASH provision had to be adapted. The approach of the program focused on people, not infrastructure. As a result, program implementation had to move at the pace of the community. To assist with this aspect, the first phase of the program focused on consultation and developing collaborative approaches to establish processes whereby the community themselves started to find solutions to their WASH challenges, and subsequently, solutions to challenges around health and social development.

This transition to people-centred development involved training community facilitators in Zambia and community WASH champions in South Africa, and encouraging them to implement activities in specific sites.

Collaborative, incremental and inclusive planning for the AACES program focused on inclusivity of women, children and people with disabilities and addressed cross-cutting issues of child protection, gender norms and rights-based responses, as well as establishing decision-making processes that included women and engaged with duty-bearers.

The flexible program approach meant that plans were incremental, based on previous activities and involved responding to emerging issues as the program unfolded and partner

and community knowledge and capacity grew. There was also ongoing capacity building of partners (for example, in monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and gender) and community members (for example, in engagement of youth in child protection training, advocacy and legal training) to meet identified needs or strengthen skills and capacity.

AACES implementation involved engagement and influencing of duty-bearers, which is necessary in people-centred and rights-based approaches and practice. The shift occurred through building the capacity of individuals and associated structures to increase their voice and engagement with duty-bearers. Shifts of power occurred from the individual to the collective, such as the collective agency of early childhood development practitioners, and from the informal to the formal response, such as youth facilitators engaging with learners in schools and later a more formal approach developed with school management.

AACES engaged with the practicality of the Theory of Change, which became a focus of partner dialogue and program reflection and planning.

It was difficult at the beginning of the program for partners to apply the Theory of Change approach in practice, but it provided a basis for discussions and ongoing conversations. Over time, the Theory of Change approach came to be understood as 'talking about change', addressing assumptions and exploring 'how to get where we want to be'. This provided an opportunity to highlight the integrated nature of the rights-based and people-centred approach to WASH, and to strengthen coordination and sharing of materials, tools and capacity across the partners.

### *Theory of Change*

*The Oxfam AACES WASH program uses a Theory of Change to illustrate how Oxfam and its partners are contributing towards the AACES WASH program objectives and the broader Oxfam vision and goal. The Theory of Change was based on the work of Rao and Kelleher's 'integral framework', which provides a matrix of change across four levels: the individual and systemic level, and the informal and formal level. The framework suggests that to effect long-term, sustainable change in people's lives, the social systems and institutions that determine the distribution of power and goods must be transformed. The framework provided a model of the spheres in which change needs to occur in order to achieve this transformation. The framework accommodates complexity and recognises that strategies to achieve change in one sphere will have effects in others and can, therefore, be supported by complementary changes in others.*

AACES focused on linking, learning, sharing and capacity building through exchange visits, annual reflections and increased monitoring and documenting capacity of partners. This cross-learning between partners within and between countries brought about an enormous change in capacity, as well as implementation momentum, whereby individual partner 'projects' linked to become a 'program'.

#### *Examples of cross-learning through site visits*

*Staff from Woza Moya visited Zimele and Biowatch as part of an exchange visit. At Biowatch they learned about seed banks and keeping waste to make compost, which is used to fertilise the soil. They hoped to continue this relationship so Woza Moya could get training on how to create seed banks and learn to re-use waste.*

*During a site visit to Equal Education, staff members from Tholulwazi Uzivikele learned about research to identify challenges learners encounter in schools and communities while trying to pursue their education. Equal Education had done research about children who walk long distances to school, for example and this led them to negotiate for 14 schools to have school transport. Staff also visited LETCEE and learned about using a toy library as part of early children development. The toy library includes a fantasy play area, puzzles for cognitive skills, books, and other resources for developing fine motor skills.*

A focus on the sustainability of the program from the design stage resulted in partnerships being formed between partners and duty-bearers at local level, across districts and provinces, and across Zambia and South Africa. In addition, there was real engagement, in the final year, with the reality of the benefits of ensuring that duty-bearers could continue to be engaged and be accountable for WASH, and how the outcomes in communities could therefore be sustained.

At the final reflection in January 2016, it was evident that South African partners had integrated WASH into their programs in a sustainable way and as a result had improved the impact of their programs in other areas such as health, food security or child safeguarding outcomes. This demonstrates the value of the integrated approach. In Zambia sustainability of outcomes was embedded in strengthened community structures, independent partners who would continue to support the community structures, local business enterprises and empowered individuals and communities.

## Where to from here?

As the AACES program comes to an end, the challenge is how the processes and outcomes will be sustained at a community level after the conclusion of the program. However, there was a general sense that there was a good foundation on which partners and communities could engage with government because of the knowledge and capacity around WASH, and the value placed on WASH and the processes of change.

It was evident that the foundational elements of capacity, structures, practice and a rights-based people-centred approach have become embedded in community practice.