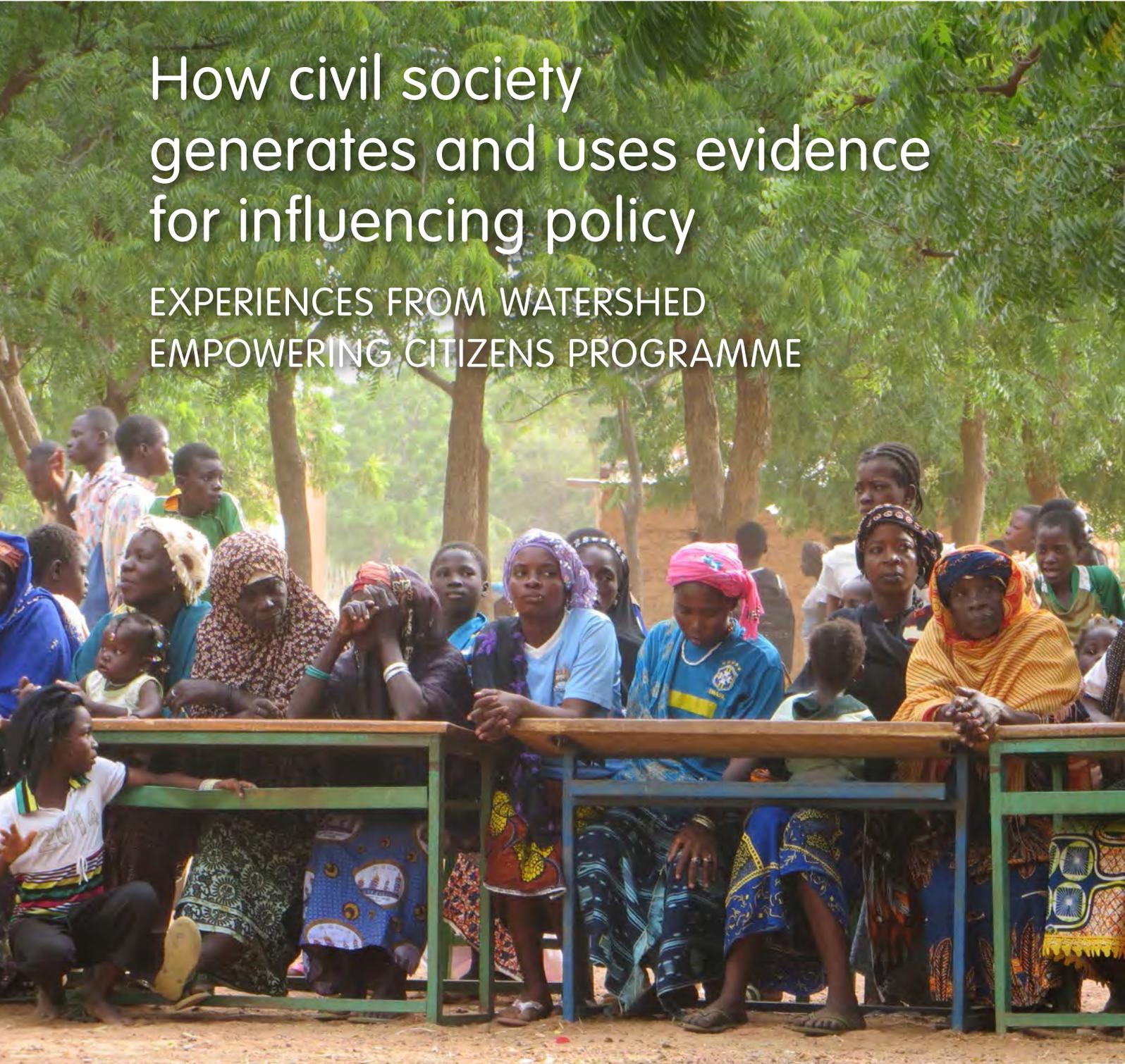


How civil society generates and uses evidence for influencing policy

EXPERIENCES FROM WATERSHED
EMPOWERING CITIZENS PROGRAMME



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Foreword

International human rights law obliges states to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination, while prioritizing those most in need. It identifies individual 'rights-holders' entitled to water and sanitation. States as 'duty-bearers' must guarantee access to services for all, realising the human rights to water and sanitation require that services be safe, available, physically accessible, affordable and acceptable.

Countries that aren't addressing this issue are acting illegally. Working towards achieving the ambition of universal, sustainable and inclusive water and sanitation is a legal obligation and a political commitment for all UN-member States.¹

In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda seek to 'realise the human rights of all' and SDG 6 intends to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, leaving no one behind.

Progress towards SDG 6 is too slow, and billions of people are left behind. If we continue to do things in the same way, we will not reach our goal to make clean water and sanitation available for all by 2030. Not only are countries off track, but governments are largely unaccountable to their citizens on progress made.

Global inequalities are visible through differences in progress rates, affordability and quality of service people enjoy across countries. Nationally, wealthy people generally receive higher levels of service at a low price than poorer people who often pay more for lower quality of services. Within countries, specific groups are often excluded from decision-making and the burden of water collection disproportionately falls on women and girls.

This is not always accidental. Exclusion can be deliberate and direct, where those in control consciously deny

access to others, or unintended and indirect, where the more powerful are unaware of the needs of the less powerful. Often, exclusion from water and sanitation services, and participation in decision-making, results from the intersectionality of individual characteristics and societal power structures (e.g. wealth, homophobia, patriarchy, class).

Achieving equality and non-discrimination in water and sanitation, therefore, requires governments to be accountable for adopting measures to support excluded groups to participate in processes that affect their lives and fulfil their commitments to human rights. When marginalised groups can stand up for their rights, when a strong civil society can represent and amplify their voices through different channels, governments are more likely to be held accountable for their commitment and market actors provided the necessary incentives and regulation to meet the human rights to water and sanitation.

Civil society can empower citizens to become more assertive members of society and dialogue with state and market actors to challenge exclusion in water and sanitation. In doing so, it can hold the banner of social justice and push decision-makers to change behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that are at the root of exclusion.

The approaches used in Watershed and described in this document show that a first step towards improved accountability is made by stronger CSO engagement in governance processes; the second step is the empowerment of citizens (voters) to raise their voices to get the attention of the legislators for deeper institutional changes. An important lesson learned is that engagement, and thus dialogue rather than dissent, seems to be a more effective influencing strategy in the sector. This is particularly true in those countries where civic space and participation is supported by policies and legislation.

¹ Resolution 64/292 of the United Nations General Assembly.



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Acronyms

CBO Capacity-Building Organisation

CN-CIEPA The Network of Journalists for Drinking Water and Sanitation

CONIWAS Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation

CSO Civil Society Organisation

DORP Development Organisation for Rural Poor

FANSA Freshwater Action Network South Asia

HEWASA Health through Water and Sanitation

KEWASNET Kenya Water and Sanitation Civil Societies Network

KWAHO Kenya Water for Health Organisation

L&A Lobby and Advocacy

LGD Local Government Division

LGI Local Government Institutions

LNOB Leave No One Behind

MFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

MoLGRDC Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives of Government

MWE Ministry of Water and Environment

NFWS National Forum for Water Supply and Sanitation

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

NIA Neighbours Initiatives Alliance

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SWA Sanitation and Water for All

UN United Nations

WAB WaterAid Bangladesh

WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WRM Water Resources Management

WSSCC Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

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Executive summary

Watershed's main purpose was to increase the capacity of civil society organisations to advance policy influencing and change. The programme aimed to strengthen civil society to be more effective, particularly in the use of clear and specific lobby and advocacy strategies, as well as the use of key evidence in these strategies on issues around water governance and management of sanitation and hygiene services in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Mali, Bangladesh, India, The Netherlands and internationally.

This paper brings together experiences from different CSOs and NGOs, including 13 case studies and lessons learned from 6 countries over the past 5 years on 'how civil society can generate and use evidence for influencing policy and practice'.

This paper is focused on evidence-based advocacy. For the purpose of this paper, 'evidence' corresponds to a selected argument (or the issue that is being advocated for), which in turn determines the nature and type of data that will be needed to support the argument. There are a 'wide range of activities that are conducted to influence decision-makers at different levels with the overall claim of combatting the structural causes of poverty and injustice' (Elbers and Kamstra, 2019) or as 'the process of undertaking active interventions with the explicit goal of influencing government policy' (Onyx et al., 2010).

Watershed supported CSOs to design country-specific strategies for lobby and advocacy. These country advocacy strategies were implemented and were used to follow progress, to identify obstacles and adapt, and to capture and measure success.

This advocacy strategy development process followed 8 steps:

- **Step 1:** Advocacy issue, root causes and identifying your evidence base
- **Step 2:** Advocacy goals and objectives
- **Step 3:** Decision-makers and influencers
- **Step 4:** Opposition and obstacles
- **Step 5:** Advocacy strengths, limitations and partnership activities
- **Step 6:** Advocacy approaches and activities
- **Step 7:** Crafting advocacy messages
- **Step 8:** Measuring advocacy progress and adaptive management

In taking up an advocacy role, CSOs can organise and mobilise constituencies, raise awareness, shape public opinion, and engage with decision-makers to influence key policies (Elbers and Kamstra, 2019). The Watershed cases have shown there are several tactics and approaches that facilitate/enable use of the data and evidence to support the decision-making journey. These include inclusive stakeholder engagement; using thematic expertise throughout the process; increasing citizen participation; and using diverse forms of data.



SOURCE: SIMAVI, KENYA

1. Background

1.1. PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The Watershed empowering citizens programme is a strategic partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IRC, Simavi, Wetlands International and Akvo.

The programme ran from 2016-2020 and through lobby and advocacy, and direct citizens engagement, it aimed to deliver improvements in the governance and management of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services as well as of the water resources on which they draw. The programme worked closely together with local civil society in Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Mali, India and Bangladesh.

This paper brings together experiences from different CSOs and NGOs, 13 case studies and lessons

learned from 6 countries over the past 5 years on 'how civil society can generate and use evidence for influencing policy and practice'.

The main target audience for this paper includes civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that wish to replicate some of the approaches and advocate for lasting WASH services that reach all, forever. For this, the paper offers a concrete road map, lessons learned and future recommendations for adaptation.

This chapter discusses how the paper was developed and introduces the concepts around evidence-based advocacy. Chapter 2 covers the theoretical process from gathering data and evidence to effectively influencing policy and decision-making. Chapter 3 analyses commonalities and trends among the various case studies, and discusses the lessons learned. The paper concludes in chapter 4 with a set of recommendations.

Objectives of the paper:

- Introduce key concepts and need for effective connections among data, evidence, policy influencing and decision-making
- Identify how civil society organisations can successfully go through the process of evidence generation and use it to influence changes in policy and decision-making
- Share key recommendations, concrete examples and a road map for successfully influencing policies, budgets and other planning for sustainable and inclusive WASH and/or WRM policies, based on evidence.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The paper was developed based on the need to share with a broader audience the experiences and lessons learned after the end of the Watershed programme, especially as evidence-based advocacy in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector is a much-needed, but fairly new approach.

The authors are experts in the field of evidence-based advocacy and have been involved in the implementation of the programme in each of the countries over the past years. They also worked in close collaboration with the civil society partners on the ground.

For the paper, various documents were reviewed, including annual and monitoring reports, to identify the stories of change where data and evidence were used to influence policies and practice. Based on that, a total of 13 case studies were selected from the Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Mali, India, Bangladesh, and the Netherlands programmes (see annex 1 for the interview template and annex 2 for the overview of case studies) on which the paper draws. The authors also interviewed the individuals involved in the identified case studies to gather additional information.

1.3. NEED FOR EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY APPROACHES

Meeting the Global Development Goals. The aim for the paper is to provide lessons learned and recommendations on how civil society can generate and use evidence for influencing policy and practice. In other words, how they can adapt an evidence-based advocacy approach.

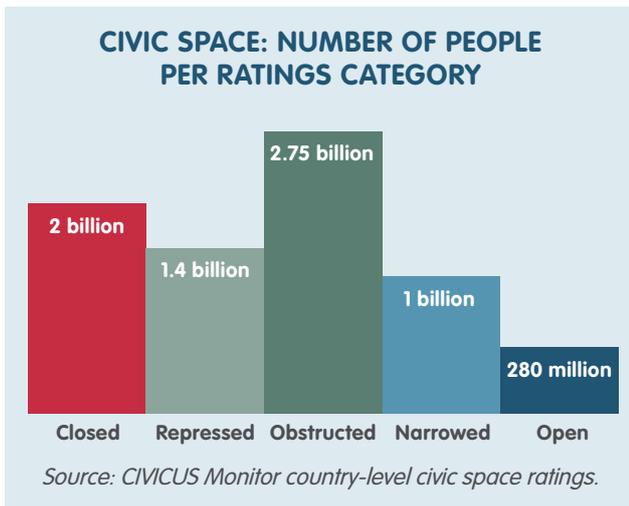
With only 10 more years to go until the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be met, the goal to ensure everyone in the world has access to lasting and safe water, sanitation and hygiene services is largely off track. Climate change, conflicts and inequalities threaten the progress, and civic space to publicly participate and to advocate for human rights is globally shrinking.

Shrinking space for civil society. Generally, more than 2 billion people live today in a place where open civic space and the ability to actively participate in the political environment is not a given (CIVICUS, 2019). In fact, the role of civil society to influence and to find effective solutions for poverty and injustice becomes more urgent than ever.

There is a growing interest within international development for marginalised groups to use their voice and be effective advocates to influence government policies, legislation and regulations in WASH, nutrition, health care, social inclusion and education, especially where traditional service delivery is having limited impact.

In taking up an advocacy role, CSOs can organise and mobilise constituencies, raise awareness, shape public

'Inclusion means that we should be in every meeting, in every board concerning the government [...] Watershed has taught us so much'
Valentine Mombafi
Keraita Chairlady
Laikipia Women with
Disability Amplified
Voices, Kenya



opinion, and engage with decision-makers to influence key policies (Elbers and Kamstra, 2019).

1.4. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

In this paper there are a couple of key concepts that need further explanation.

Data and Evidence. Before discussing the definition of ‘evidence-based advocacy’ it is important to understand the distinction between ‘data’ and ‘evidence’. ‘Data’ on its own has no intrinsic meaning. It simply is factual information, such as numbers, percentages or statistics. Only when ‘data’ furnishes proof to support an argument, a viewpoint, an opinion or a hypothesis does it become ‘evidence’.

For advocacy purposes, ‘evidence’ corresponds to a selected argument (or the issue that is being advocated for), which in turn determines the nature and type of data that will be needed to support the argument. In the case studies selected for this paper, evidence often can be as straightforward as a policy in which various commitments were made (for instance the ‘2016-2030 WASH strategy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs’).

Advocacy. There are multiple definitions of advocacy. In fact, the examples in this paper draw on examples from the WASH sector, but the approaches for effective advocacy or policy influencing throughout different sectors, such as healthcare and nutrition, are similar and replicable.

Most definitions come down to a ‘wide range of activities that are conducted to influence decision-makers at different levels with the overall claim of combatting the structural causes of poverty and injustice’ (Elbers and Kamstra, 2019) or as ‘the process of undertaking active interventions with the explicit goal of influencing government policy’ (Onyx et al., 2010).

Bringing the two together, in this paper we define **evidence-based advocacy** as a process, based on data and information, which integrates otherwise independent data from different sectors (research, policy, action groups, clinicians, practitioners, etc.) into an analysis, to inform advocacy. In other words, identified issues that are brought to the table are rooted in evidence. In fact, evidence-based advocacy is much more effective than any other kind of advocacy that can just be written off as ideological (Storeng and Béhague, 2014).

According to Elbers and Kamstra (2019), a CSO’s ‘persuasiveness depends for an important part on the credibility of its claim. This requires the capacity to produce evidence’. Being able as an organisation to conduct research and to collect and present data is particularly useful in countries where governmental agencies are under-resourced and lack up-to-date knowledge and expertise.

However, having an issue and solution rooted in evidence will not automatically lead to changes in policy or practice. In fact, policy-making is never fully evidence-based; at best it is evidence-informed and subject to other impacting factors (Cairney, 2016). An often-heard comment on evidence-based advocacy is that the gathered data and research outputs are not directly linked to strategies or the demand of the audience.

Other often-used concepts are **policy** and **legislation**, which are identified as the required frameworks that are necessary for successful and sustainable practices, where government sets out its vision for the sector (policy) and determines the legal framework for achieving that vision (legislation). However, good policy and legislation are effective only if they are applied and enforced.

‘The lives of communities can be changed through dialogue, through engagement and through listening. [...] and my greatest wish is to see that everyone has access to water and sanitation’
 Stephen Birungi,
 Programme Officer,
 Caritas Fort Portal –
 HEWASA, Uganda

And lastly, **regulation** and **accountability**, which cover these above-mentioned enforcement processes as well as other mechanisms to hold decision-makers, service providers and users (through advocacy) to account. Here accountability means that those who are responsible accept responsibility for their actions and omissions and can be called upon to explain how they have acted or why they have failed to act. These accountability mechanisms are considered effective if they are transparent, engage a diversity of stakeholders, facilitate and encourage critical reflection on progress

and both respond to and anticipate stakeholders’ issues (Huston and Moriarty, 2018). These accountability and regulation mechanisms should be used by CSOs and other stakeholders for effective advocacy.

2. An integrated approach: The road map to evidence-based advocacy

Before looking into the practical examples and case studies, this chapter provides a concrete road map on how to develop an 'evidence-based advocacy strategy' that will be critical to everyone wishing to advocate for lasting change.²

Watershed's main purpose was to increase the capacity of civil society organisations to advance policy influencing and change. The programme aimed at strengthening civil society to be more effective, in particular in the use of clear and specific lobby and advocacy strategies, as well as the use of key evidence in these strategies on issues around water governance and management of sanitation and hygiene services in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Mali, Bangladesh, India, The Netherlands and internationally.

Throughout the whole 5-year programme many examples of evidence-based lobby and advocacy have been documented annually, certainly through the outcome harvesting sessions. Evidence-based lobby and advocacy is a process, based on data and information, which integrates otherwise independent data from different sectors (research, policy, action groups, clinicians, practitioners etc.) into an analysis, to inform advocacy actions.

Watershed paid special attention to strengthening the country-specific strategies for lobby and advocacy. This meant that each country team developed specific routes based on the issue and its root causes, the identification of the long-term and high-level goals and objectives as well

as the short-term steps to achieve these, and the 'with who' and when to act. These country advocacy strategies were implemented and were used to follow progress, to identify obstacles and adapt, and to capture and measure success. Next to these there was also constant coaching of L&A experts in the development of the country strategies and their adaptations.

This integrated approach has followed the following 8 steps:

STEP 1. Advocacy issue, root causes and identifying your evidence base

Identifying advocacy issue and root causes. In development, it is possible to identify a range of problems or issues that, for example, cause the SDGs to be off track. In order to effectively influence policy, it is key to make these big problems specific and concrete. This can be done by asking 'what is the most relevant issue or problem that needs to be addressed through a change in policy, legislation, regulation or budget?' and 'what is currently happening in the political or economic environment that would need to change?'

A good issue (or problem) for advocacy is a current objective or focus area of your work or programme; rooted in evidence; can be improved with advocacy; can be achieved within 3-5 years; and is specific and clear.



² The advocacy strategy template can be found here:

<https://www.ircwash.org/wash-advocacy-strategy-workshop-facilitator%E2%80%99s-guide>.

KENYA

Issue.

In Kajiado Kenya, pastoralists are facing challenges to access safe water. And the area is frequently tormented with droughts.

Evidence base.

Based on the issue, the team started to collect data and to analyse the distribution of water points and the people unserved. The team wrote policy briefs that they shared with the local government. They also shared the consolidated data as the government did not have those available.

Lessons learned.

'Data wins all the time', 'simplify data' and 'government ownership of data is crucial and the first step to change'.



SOURCE: IRC, KENYA

After identifying the *key issue*, the root causes leading to that issue need to be identified. This can be done by asking 'why is this a problem?' To understand if the root cause can be addressed with advocacy, the following questions can be asked: *do you have any evidence that this is a root cause?, can a policy change or implementation of an existing policy help improve the root cause?, does your organisation have programmatic experience with addressing this root cause?*

Evidence base. In advocacy, sometimes the issue will arise from the available evidence. At other times, after an issue is identified civil society can gather the required data and evidence to support their claim and to convince the decision-maker or other stakeholders.

The process of converting the data into robust evidence for advocacy can be described as follows:

a. Identification of required evidence for advocacy.

Once the key issues and root causes (for which evidence is needed) are clearly defined, the key parameters that are likely to influence the 'argument' need to be identified. This will determine what data is needed to generate the evidence.

b. Identification of data sources. Multiple sources of data about the selected issue and root causes may be available of which the most relevant data sources need to be identified. This will decide how much of the information already exists in, for example, secondary sources. What remains to be collected is referred to as primary data. Amongst others, national reports, census data, research documents and NGO reports serve as good sources of secondary data. Once the type and sources of data collection are estimated, the need and

methods for evidence generation (qualitative or quantitative) and quantity of data collection will have to be designed.

Ideally, the decision-makers that need to be influenced by the evidence will determine the final design for the data collection, its granularity and the way it will be presented. Here it is important to prepare the plan for organising and analysing the data prior to the data collection process.

c. Evidence generation. Data collection needs to be done systematically (not anecdotally), and care should be taken to collect only what is needed. The data and information should be reliable, valid and timely. In fact, data analysis should be done in a manner which will make it applicable and relevant to the identified issue and build the required 'evidence base'. In fact, meaningful interpretations of the data can hold convincing power when messages are taken to key stakeholders. During dissemination, the evidence needs to be interpretable, clear and easy to understand. Thus, in order to *present* data in a coherent fashion, it will have to be organised into meaningful but powerful summaries, for example, by using visualizations, a map or other graphs.

STEP 2. Advocacy goals and objectives

Based on the identified key issue and root causes, rooted in evidence, the advocacy goals and objectives need to be developed. Generally, step 1 and 2 are the most time-consuming and arguably the most important steps in this road map. Here objectives are identified as the short-term steps towards achieving the main goal(s).

The following (simplified) example clarifies the link between the key issue and goal, and root causes and objectives:

Key issue. Unsafe and polluted river water	Goal. Clean and healthy river
Root causes. 1. Wastewater is untreated; 2. nearby dumping site; 3. plastic ends up in the river	Objectives. 1. Wastewater is treated; 2. Dumping site is moved to nearby area with safe distance from the river; 3. Plastic is taken from (or not thrown in) the river.

Clear and simple goal(s) and objectives are the ‘easiest’ to achieve in advocacy as these will result in simple messages (step 7). In other words, goals and objectives need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based (‘SMART’). And they answer to the following questions:

Who or what decision-making institution has the power to act on your advocacy issue? Who should you target?

What is the change that you would like to see relative to your advocacy issue?

How can you achieve the specific action required of the decision-making institute to make the change?

When is your window of opportunity (‘policy window’) or timeframe for action to influence decision-making?

It is important throughout the process to revisit the evidence you have and assess if it is sufficient or if additional evidence is needed to make your case.

STEP 3. Decision-makers and influencers

To make change happen, advocates can directly influence the decision-maker (those in power to make the needed change) or indirectly through someone that has influence on the decision-maker. In this step, it is important to identify ‘who has the power’ to achieve the desired change, and what are their key interests.

In fact, power relations shape the potential for achieving policy change. It is key to identify these power dynamics, getting to know the audience, their policy-making environment, and identifying the wider contextual influences and trends. This can be done through an important ‘power mapping exercise’.³

In this exercise, **decision-makers** can be separated from **influencers**, where decision-makers are people with the formal power or authority to take the desired policy action and/or their key advisors or staff, and influencers are people or groups who can have a compelling force on the actions, opinions, or behavior of decision-makers.

Key questions to identify the decision-makers and influencers related to the issue and goal are *what are their priorities?, what motivates them?, what is their background?, how supportive are they of your issue?, and how aware are they of your issue?* Having a champion for your cause, as mentioned in the case study from The Netherlands, will highly increase the chances of achieving policy change.

Therefore, having evidence is only one element, whereas creating and having the right partnerships and networks is vital to ‘understand the [policy] system’. For that reason, including the decision-makers and influencers in the beginning of the research process is equally important.

THE NETHERLANDS

Putting water at the top of the political agenda.

Since September 2017, more than 25 members of the Dutch House of Representatives from eight different political parties have committed to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They became champions for the SDGs through the ‘Adopt an SDG’ campaign. For the water sector, two Parliamentarians opted for SDG6. According to the Parliamentarians ‘Adopting SDG 6 has made me much more aware of the urgency of addressing global water challenges’ and ‘This initiative allows me to be involved more deeply and show how essential water is’.

³ See <https://www.ircwash.org/wash-advocacy-strategy-workshop-facilitator%E2%80%99s-guide>.

STEP 4. Opposition and obstacles

During the 'power mapping exercise' it is equally important to identify the **opposition** or possible **obstacles** that can have a counter effect on the envisioned advocacy goal and objectives. Understanding the competitors' view can help to prepare for 'counter messaging'. In this paper, opposition is understood as a group of adversaries or competitors, or a rival political party, and obstacle as something that blocks one's way or prevents or hinders progress.

Competition mainly consists of parties that benefit from the status quo and want to prevent the change from happening through counter narratives or evidence. In many examples, these competitors are playing a central role in the power dynamics and are well informed of the policy environment to identify opportunities for change (or prevention of change to maintain the status quo).

STEP 5. Advocacy strengths, limitations and partnerships activities

Another important step in the road map is mapping the strengths and limitations of one's organisation and partnerships. This is also referred to as mapping the assets (organisational and individual strengths and abilities) and gaps (organisational and individual weaknesses or areas that would need support). An asset or gap could also include the (non) availability of data, information and evidence to support the cause, or the lack of an experienced advocate or 'messenger' to take the message to the attention of the decision-maker. If so, then an organisation could consider finding partners to do joint advocacy with.

In fact, evidence-based advocacy is more effective as part of a wider alliance or network. Therefore, it is important to form coalitions with 'like-minded' parties. Often CSOs form small coalitions for joint advocacy. A strategic partnership can ensure alliances or coalitions that cover a wide range of interests, skills and personal contacts (Cullerton et al., 2016).

An effective mix of insider and outsider advocates could further support the cause (Maloney et al., 1994). Strategic reasons to partner with other organisations are that it adds to the number of influencers working on the issue, and it

brings together new constituents demonstrating wide-scale and diverse support for the issue. It also improves the ability to reach and persuade a wider set of decision-makers and influencers, and it offers organisations with few resources an opportunity to jointly compete with the opposition that tries to maintain the status quo, as joint advocacy yields additional expertise, skills and resources to fill the gaps.

Overall, joint advocacy between partners can happen through information and data sharing, developing of common messages, mutual consultation, joint planning and strategizing, and within coalitions and alliances.

Information and data sharing. Individuals and organisations agree to freely share information and data based on their contacts and what they learn in their work, but there is no joint decision-making or requirement to use the information in a certain way.

Developing common messages. Partners agree to share information and then analyse it together to identify trends and develop shared messages. Each organisation will use these messages as they see fit within their own advocacy and not necessarily in coordination with each other.

Mutual consultation. Partners use one another as a resource to develop their own individual plans to achieve policy advocacy goals. They get ideas from each other but still do separate work.

Joint planning and strategizing. Partners identify similar challenges and develop mutually reinforcing plans and strategies to address them. Each partner does its own work and holds the other accountable for agreed-upon actions.

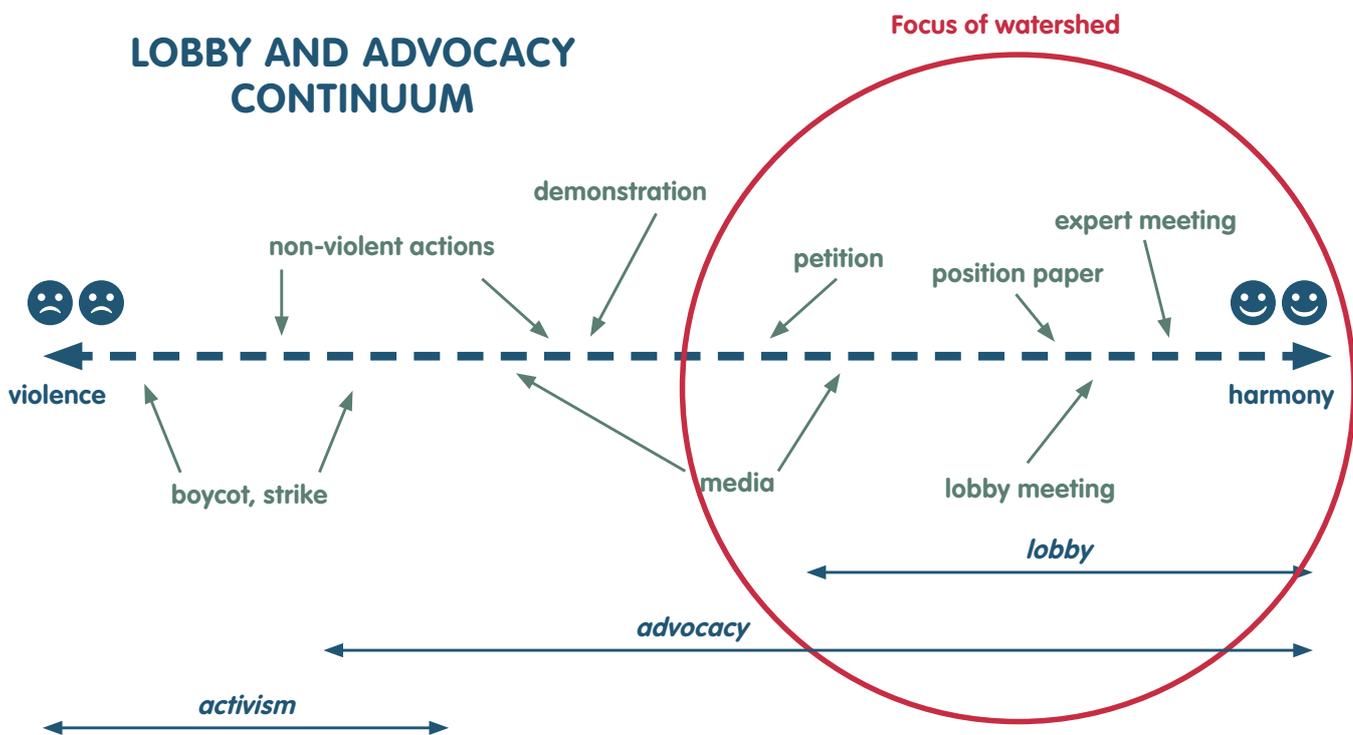
Coalitions and alliances. These constitute the most formal type of collaboration, where individuals and organisations work together on a shared plan of action. They are committed to supporting the plan and each other. Some coalitions are temporary, and the partners disband after they reach their common goal. Other coalitions are like a long-term alliance, with a permanent structure and organisation.

Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) is a regional coalition of civil society organisations that support country level networks of civil society to implement advocacy for WASH including for the most marginalised.⁴

The Sanitation and Water for All Civil Society Constituency has been advocating for WASH during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

⁴ See <https://www.wsscc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2020/07/LNOB-India-Summit-Summary.pdf>.

⁵ See <https://www.sanitationandwaterforall.org/news/putting-ears-ground-how-swa-civil-society-partners-are-advocating-water-sanitation-and-hygiene>.



STEP 6. Advocacy approaches and activities

The ‘advocacy strategy’ can be brought to practice by identifying the best approaches, activities and tactics to achieve the envisioned advocacy goal. In hindsight, also in the different case studies of this paper, effective advocacy seems like a linear or straightforward process. In fact, that is not the case.

Overall, it is slightly more complex and messy. However, the advocacy strategy offers the opportunity and guidance to prepare various tactics for achieving the envisioned change. This requires identifying what ‘type, mix, timing and sequencing of evidence and other influencing tactics will most plausibly contribute to desired change’ (Mayne et al., 2018).

Approaches and activities. For advocacy a range of approaches can be adopted; some might be more ‘dialogue and insider’ focused, others might be more focused on ‘dissent and the outsider approach’. These approaches all depend on right timing and mix of approaches. Examples are organising events, holding meetings with decision-makers, sharing materials such as research and publication, involving the media, or organising demonstrations and petitions.

Timing and ‘policy window’. During political or economic change or crisis (for example, elections or a natural disaster), policy-makers can be more receptive to recommendations or advice from the ‘outside’. However, they will most probably get in touch with the advocates or researchers they already know on the topic. Therefore,

it is important that advocates invest in building links and relationships with decision-makers in advance of such opportunities, or to be able to identify these opportunities in the first place.

While identifying the best mix of tactics, questions to consider are *will the activity address our decision-makers’ key interests?, will the activities catch the interest of our decision-makers and/or their influencers?, will the activity lessen the influence of any opposing groups or counter their messages?, do we have the expertise and resources to carry out the activity?, what upcoming events, significant dates, or government decisions could be opportunities for mobilization and advocacy?, and does the activity pose any risk to our organisation?*

STEP 7. Crafting advocacy messages

After having identified the goals and objectives, the target audience and tactics, it is key to bring this all down into simple and clear messages. Unfortunately, researchers often make the mistake of addressing an issue by trying to share too much or too complex high-quality research evidence in a highly crowded environment. Such evidence matters, but its framing and the receptivity of policy-makers to its implications are as important as scientific assessments of its quality.

‘You could have all the evidence in the world, and it won’t get you action. And sometimes you can get action without evidence.’ (Cullerton et al., 2018)

BANGLADESH

Timing is everything.

After different efforts by CSOs, about 60 days before the new fiscal year, Union Parishads organised an open budget dialogue. Almost 1000 people joined in the dialogues to claim their rights to water, sanitation and hygiene.

As a result, nine Union Parishads in Bhola allocated separate WASH budgets for women, the disabled and marginalised including some of the country's poorest, as a component of their annual budget.



SOURCE: SIMAVI, BANGLADESH

Effective advocates frame their messages in line with the interests and need of the policy-maker; a compelling story or a concrete recommendation. Because policy-makers deal with their limited ability and time to process all information by developing rules, norms and standard operating procedures to simplify action, it is recommended to invest in relationships with partners, decision-makers and influencers to develop trust and credibility.

Effective messages are brief, focused, solution-oriented, evidence-based, non-technical, optimistic and hopeful, and have a clear request or recommendation.

Humanising a complex issue and using visuals can also improve the message. In short, an effective advocacy message needs to address the following four parts; clear, relevant and urgent issue, proposed solution and follow up.

*What is the **issue**?*

Why should the decision-maker care about the issue?

*What is the **proposed solution** and how will it impact the problem?*

What do you want the decision-maker to specifically do following your interaction?

STEP 8. Measuring advocacy progress and adaptive management

As advocacy is often a matter of trial and error, it is key for effective advocacy to be flexible and to apply adaptive management that offers room for opportunistic advocacy approaches. To be successful, organisations need to continuously reflect on successes and failures.

In the Watershed programme, success was measured through monitoring of these various 'advocacy strategies', 'Theories of Change' and programme-applied Outcome Harvesting;⁶ a methodology that allows to identify incremental policy changes in hindsight. Overall policy change can take about 3-5 years. Therefore, it is important to identify and to monitor especially the short-term objectives, to track and to celebrate these achievements.

Although these 8 steps seem well structured and easy to navigate through, it is important to re-emphasize that influencing the implementation of public policy can be a complex and difficult process especially for those with limited power and resources. One of the key difficulties is that this process is rarely linear (Clavier and De Leeuw, 2013). In fact, advocacy is conducted through interactions among different stakeholders, all holding on to different interests, with various windows of opportunity (or 'policy windows') for influencing changes (Kingdon, 1995). This will become even more evident in the next chapter, bringing the road map into practice.

⁶ See <https://watershed.nl/media/guidelines-for-the-last-outcome-harvesting-sensemaking-workshop-may-june-2020/>.

3. Lessons learned from the Watershed Programme

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CASES

As noted in the methodology section, through a process of background review and interviews conducted with each of the Watershed work packages, examples of successful evidence-based advocacy were identified.

From the interviews, 13 cases were identified, representing the diverse Watershed geographic areas, including Bangladesh, India, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Uganda, The Netherlands and the global perspective. The cases represent examples from district, national and global levels as well as a variety of thematic areas including water

quality; citizen participation; social inclusion and leave no one behind; finance and budgets; and accountability. The table below provides an overview of the cases.

This section of the paper looks at the commonalities in the cases and tries to identify the enabling factors that can lead to small and large changes in district, national and global level policies, practices and budgets.

Eight of the case studies demonstrated changes at the district or sub-national level while nine focused on national-level changes. Of these cases, one linked the district to national and another case brought together the national,

Country Work Package	Case	Organisation	Sub-National/District	National	Regional	Global	Water Quality	Citizen Participation	Gender	Finance/Budgets	LNOB/Social Inclusion	Accountability	Election monitoring
Bangladesh	Revision of Pro-Poor Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh	WaterAid Bangladesh		✓							✓		
Bangladesh	Inclusive budgets that include the most vulnerable	DORP	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	
Ghana	Changes in water quality in Tarkwa Municipality	Hope for Future Generations, Conservation Foundation, CONIWAS	✓				✓	✓		✓			
Kenya	Kajiado County water master plan and associated budget	CESPED, NIA, KEWASNET	✓				✓			✓			
Kenya	Election monitoring	KEWASNET, Simavi, Akvo		✓									✓
Kenya	Water quality Laikipia	Akvo	✓				✓						
India	GDPD planning and budgeting process Odisha	Gram Utthan	✓				✓			✓			
India	Village Water and Sanitation Committees in Bihar	NIDAN	✓					✓					
India	Local and national level budget tracking	CGBA, IRC		✓							✓	✓	
International	Finance included in the SWA objectives for new strategy	IRC, Water.org				✓				✓	✓		
Mali	Wastewater Treatment in Bamako	CN-CIEPA	✓	✓			✓			✓			
Netherlands	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA) 50/30 commitment and WASH Strategy	IRC		✓			✓						
Uganda	Wottazella – increasing community participation through radio programming	HEWASA	✓				✓	✓			✓		

regional and global – taking data and evidence to decision-makers at higher levels often beyond the original intention of the data use.

The thematic areas include improvement of water quality (nine cases), increasing finance and budgets (seven cases) and social inclusion and leaving no one behind (six cases). In addition, four cases focused mostly on citizen participation and three on accountability.

All cases demonstrate the effectiveness of using data and evidence for advocacy leading to changes in policies including implementation, budget allocations and increasing citizen participation as well as others.

Several cases demonstrate the linkages between using data and evidence from the local level to influence national and global level policies and practices. Data which is to be used for advocacy flows either top down or bottom up depending on the problem and associated advocacy solutions.

3.2 TACTICS AND APPROACHES THAT WORKED

The Watershed cases have shown there are several tactics and approaches that facilitate/enable the data and evidence to decision-making journey. These include inclusive stakeholder engagement; using thematic expertise throughout the process; increasing citizen participation; and using diverse forms of data.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement leads to change

In several cases, the evidence-based advocacy process included decision-makers, usually government, from the beginning. Instead of treating government solely as a target, it was more effective to include the government as a collaborator and stakeholder in the process. The process should be multi-stakeholder from the beginning; there are many ways to do this beyond in-person meetings.

In Kenya, the Laikipia County government participated in joint data collection about WASH services with KWAHO, a Watershed partner. The staff from the County were trained in digital data collection, and information about water point functionality was collected through a joint survey. This created ownership of the data and triggered discussions on

- The need to address water quality concerns and regular water quality monitoring, particularly in cholera-affected communities
- Incorporation of water quality monitoring into the Laikipia County Integrated Development Plan (CIPD) for 2018-2022

- Revisiting the CIPD to include budget allocations for unserved populations (e.g. borewells to families who could not access piped water)

- The relevance of updated data to inform service delivery and the advantage of having the skills and capacity within the government to track these activities

The result was changes to the CIPD for annual water quality monitoring to be done by the Laikipia County government and used in the decision-making process for where to direct resources.

Including government in data collection can also be seen in the national level election monitoring case from Kenya. To track the promises made during the election relating to water, a WRM and WASH monitoring tool was developed. The data collection process was done in collaboration with the authorities responsible for delivery of the actions including line ministries, county departments and water sector agencies. In November 2017 and May 2018, Watershed partners, local CSOs and county representatives from the water department met for a data mining exercise to update the RSR monitoring frameworks for three counties as well as national pages.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement can also refer to citizen engagement in the evidence-based advocacy process. 'Uganda. Using radio to engage citizens' (below) is an example of promoting citizen voice in decision-making processes. There are several other examples that bring citizens and all stakeholders together to create sustainable and institutionalized platforms for inclusive dialogue. See the case on budget tracking from Bangladesh.

UGANDA

Using radio to engage citizens.

The Wottazella 4.0 campaign in Uganda generated data that was used to engage duty bearers. This campaign was designed to address key issues at the district level and hold government accountable while increasing citizen voice and participation in the processes. The initial steps in the process included a workshop that brought together NGOs working on the Watershed programme, CSOs, members of the government from MWE, district water officers, individuals from the sub-county level LC-III, community representation: lower-level CBOs, women's groups at village level, representatives from media – radio, news anchors – to define poll questions. This process was used to generate evidence and data which was in turn used to develop infographics that illustrate the community's feedback on an issue. These were used by the Watershed program directed at barazas, district level. What the infographics showed was that more than 1,000 voices including those of the disabled were captured and represented. This level of input could not have been done through in-person meetings.

Using thematic champions to drive advocacy

Another tactic is to use technical and/or thematic champions and experts to help drive evidence-based advocacy. In almost all cases, there were thematic experts brought in to validate the evidence and bring key messages forward to the decision-makers. An example is the case of increasing visibility of financing the SDGs among global level stakeholders. In this case having experts who could translate the data and evidence into clear messaging and 'asks' or requests for change to decision-makers was key.

Increasing direct citizen participation (with evidence)

Another approach is to put the data and evidence in the hands of citizens. This helps create more effective and sustainable change. Empowering citizens to use information and provide space for their voice increases the credibility of the data and evidence in holding government accountable. This can be seen in the Wottazella case mentioned above as well as in India. In India, they were

able to increase citizen and civil society participation in budget tracking processes. Instead of asking for more money, the citizens asked and demanded for more efficiencies within the budgets and budget processes. As seen in cases from Bangladesh, India and The Netherlands, inclusive budget tracking involving citizen empowerment led to improvements in budget allocation and uptake. In Bangladesh, local Watershed partner DORP demonstrated that bringing voices forward to influence local budgets and including citizen voice in budget platforms and processes can bring about larger policy change.

3.3 COMMON CHALLENGES UNDERTAKING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

There were many challenges identified in the evidence-based advocacy process. The challenges fell into several themes including misconceptions about data and evidence; resources for evidence-based advocacy; and working in silos, partnerships and competing agendas.

ADVOCACY FOR GLOBAL FINANCE

Using advocacy strategies to elevate WASH finance as a global priority.

In 2016, within the Watershed programme and jointly with Water.org, we have identified that in most discussions around financing the SDGs

- There is limited knowledge (including language and concepts) in the actors to discuss financial issues in the WASH sector adequately. Also, most CSOs and networks in the sector have not engaged in this area.
- The cost of financing the Enabling Environment (i.e. direct and indirect support) are ignored, discussions focus on covering only CapEx and CapManEx and ignore funds required for EE. There is generally lack of accountability for the lack of sustainability of services.
- Moving forward requires a comprehensive approach tapping taxes, tariffs, transfers and commercial finance.
- Public finance is critical to reach the poorest and marginalised (especially at district/municipal level) and this is a message absent to date (2016).
- In many countries where Watershed partners and Water.org work, even when budget lines for EE are being created, they are not being used – late disbursements to districts of central funds, lack of accountability and absorption capacity given delays (public financial management)

Between 2016-2020, Watershed partner IRC engaged in a partnership with Water.org at the global level to address strategically the issues mentioned above. They developed a joint advocacy strategy, targeting specific influential organisations in the sector. The strategy has been revised on an annual basis.

The engagement with the World Bank and IRC's (influential position in the SWA partnership) were critical to the adoption of the paper 'Mobilizing finance for WASH. Getting the foundations right'. This has led to the use of a common language among the SWA partnership, addressing most of the issues mentioned above, and inspired the SWA team to develop a Handbook as a tool Finance Ministers could use to develop financing solutions for their WASH challenges.

Given the relevance of the finance theme within systems strengthening, in 2020 SWA has adopted it as a third objective of the overall partnership.

At country level, IRC and Watershed partners have provided capacity strengthening to NGOs and CSOs on budget tracking and budget participation. NGOs and CSOs in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Uganda, and Mali have then used this knowledge and trained other CSOs and CBOs. In Uganda, India, and Kenya NGOs and CSOs have formed partnerships with budget tracking organisations). As a result, there is greater transparency and accountability, and WASH budgets have increased in specific areas.⁷

⁷ See https://watershed.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/084-202014BN_CS0-influence-in-WASH-Resources_Budgets-.pdf.



SOURCE: IRC, BANGLADESH

Misconceptions on what is considered 'data'

One key challenge around data and evidence to be used in advocacy involves its definition. There is often a narrow view and misconception of what constitutes data. Many people focus on numerical data only (or they struggle with what information is most relevant (primary or secondary data, quantitative vs qualitative data, etc.)). One powerful statement from one disabled person at a key meeting can be sometimes more powerful than large-scale data collection that shows that 2% of the unserved population are disabled (Kenya).

There is also a focus in the sector to move fast into primary data collection. It is common for colleagues in the sector to feel the need to collect new data instead of looking first for existing information and collecting new data only when necessary. Sometimes the technical data was not established in a participatory way and focuses on independent agendas, which leads to questions about the relevance and legitimacy of the data. In advocacy it is important to recognize all the different types of data including secondary data such as existing policies, regulations, budgets or reports done by other organisations.

The Uganda case used radio program responses to make the case for improvements in water and sanitation at the district level.

Challenges also exist around the characteristics of evidence including quality, relevance, legitimacy and reliability.

Data disaggregation is necessary for targeting messaging, advocacy activities, etc. but this can be difficult to do. For example, the term 'poor' is not homogenous as there are sub-groups within the poor such as the ultra-poor in Bangladesh. Often data is not disaggregated by the government or those using data for influencing, which makes it extremely difficult to address the root cause of a problem. This is very important because in many cases, policies exist, but the adequate and fair implementation of the policy needs data breakdown/disaggregation which influence inequalities in access to services.

Resources are needed for identifying and/or collecting data and turning data into evidence and Institutionalising advocacy

Resources are needed for effective advocacy, but since advocacy mostly consists of people's time, this can be difficult to fund. Because of competing priorities, limited resources and limited capacity, it is important for anyone engaged in advocacy to be both strategic in what they want to achieve but also opportunistic to capitalize on existing resources, partners and platforms.

It can be difficult to identify small incremental changes at the local level, difficult to measure and find funding to support those activities such as regular meetings with

decision-makers. The most difficult resources to acquire are for Institutionalising advocacy so that it is not a one-off activity or project but can support the ongoing efforts that contribute to advocacy objectives and ultimately achieve the longer-term advocacy goal.

Partnerships: avoiding working in silos and competing agendas

As organisations working in development, we often work in thematic or issue-based silos which applies equally to our advocacy. The question is, could more have been achieved if we moved beyond WASH and our sector silos and worked together on overlapping issues? The same silos apply to decision-makers and targets of your advocacy. Many decision-makers work in different departments, which can prove difficult when considering your advocacy goals and objective. The messaging and approaches may differ because the interests and priorities of the decision-makers differ. It is common to see multiple organisations working on the same issue but not working collaboratively, and therefore creating competing agendas. This leads to confusion and challenges for decision-makers.

Partnerships are important with advocacy, and defining roles and responsibilities is essential. Advocacy is difficult to do if partnerships are fragmented. That leads to mixed messages and competing priorities. Speaking with one voice is necessary as it is extremely challenging for an individual or one organisation to advocate on their own and achieve significant changes in policies and budgets.

Matching national, regional and global advocacy efforts is complex

Given that advocacy targets need to be defined by each country, region, district, it's quite complex to match and speak with one voice at the regional or global level. There is no denying that linking local level advocacy and influencing to national, regional and/or global is a challenge and either is too general to be effective or too specific for all countries and partners to identify with. Advocacy is needed at all levels, but addressing advocacy at each level means different target audiences, adapting messages and differing objectives. A joint advocacy strategy that clarifies common interests and specific organisational targets can go a long way in terms of alignment but requires coordination efforts beyond the scope of a single organisation.

CHANGING NATIONAL POLICY IN BANGLADESH

Revision of Pro-Poor Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh

On 13 November 2019, the National Forum for Water Supply and Sanitation (NFWSS) formally recommended to the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRDC) of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh to approve the revision of the Pro-Poor Strategy for the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh.

In 2019, prior to the recommendation, a National Working Committee (NWC) was formed by LGD to review and update the strategy. WaterAid Bangladesh (WAB), Lead Partner of Watershed in Bangladesh, initiated the process of updating the strategy by sending a formal letter to the Senior Secretary of the LGD, MoLGRDC indicating the revision of the Pro Poor strategy should align with SDG 6. WAB facilitated discussions between LGD and civil society organisations (CSOs). A National Working Committee (NWC) was formed by LGD to review the revision. WaterAid jointly with the Policy Support Branch (PSB) of LGD

and MoLGRDC initiated consultations on the strategy to get reflections from WASH Networks and CSOs. During the national level consultation, representatives from CSOs, LGIs and other stakeholders provided feedback and recommendations to help finalize the strategy. Afterwards, the strategy was submitted to the NFWSS to take it forward for approval.

The revised 'Pro-Poor Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh, June 2020' was approved in June 2020 and is now publicly available. Both the Bangla and English revised version of Strategy is now available in the website of Policy Support Branch (PSB) of Local Government Division.

The proposed revision of the pro-poor strategy aligns with the pledge to leave nobody behind as stated in the SDGs and created provision of 100% subsidy to WASH services for the most poor and marginalised. Consequently, it will help achieve

the 'leave no one behind' agenda. The process of revising the strategy created space for CSOs and WASH networks to actively participate and provide recommendations based on their experiences and the reality on the ground. Presenting public opinion in the 'Policy Support Branch (PSB)' website⁸ encouraged a healthy and inclusive dialogue with citizens. For the first time, citizens were privy to the national consultations (organised by DORP and WaterAid jointly with other WASH networks i.e. Freshwater Action Network South Asia, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council – Bangladesh, Bangladesh Water Integrity Network, WASH Alliance International) and were given a space to comment and share their citizens' and CSOs' views. Throughout the process secondary data was used to advocate for these changes. This process set an example for other departments within the government to adopt transparent and accountable modes of policy-making.

⁸ See <https://psb.gov.bd/>

Targets of advocacy keep changing

Champions and targets of advocacy can change, which can delay advocacy. For example, government officials rotate within different departments or there is an election and the target stakeholders shift, which means teams may need to start from the beginning to assess the interest of the new officials in the advocacy issue.

Individual relationships play a key role in advocacy. When relationships with targets have been built over time, shifts in positions can provide significant delays in goal and objective achievement. This can also work in the reverse. If you were unable to make any traction with your target but after the change, the newly identified target is supportive and prioritizes your issues, this could shorten the timeline needed to achieve your goal.

3.4 LESSONS FOR IMPROVING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

This section outlines lessons learnt from the cases on how the process from data and evidence to decision-making through advocacy can be improved.

Regular, formal and informal, interactions with decision-makers

Constant follow-up is essential to achieving any advocacy objectives and goals. In all cases, the advocates maintained a consistent drumbeat throughout their follow-up with decision-makers including regular meetings, writing letters, sharing new data and evidence when available and co-hosting events.

This relates to the element of time. It takes 3-5 years or more to accomplish bigger picture advocacy goals and objectives and see real change. But as seen in several cases if opportunity presents itself (for example, legislation is slated for review in the immediate future), then there is an opportunity to see both small changes as well as larger changes with greater impact in a shortened timeframe. It is important to capitalize on these opportunities. In Bangladesh, after several years the approval of the Pro-Poor Strategy demonstrated real change. In Kajiado County, Kenya, after four years of working with the government on WASH and sexual and reproductive health, ongoing dialogue with the relevant line ministries led to an increase in budget allocations for sanitation.⁹

The 'data to evidence' journey is always different

It does not matter if problem identification is the starting point for your advocacy followed by data collection and analysis to support the problem OR if data and evidence



SOURCE: IRC, BANGLADESH

drive the advocacy process. A commonality across all cases is data and evidence are necessary to drive change but the timing for data collection and analysis can vary.

Looking at the data to evidence journey, the cases demonstrated that the process for converting data and evidence into use for decision-making was different in each case. For example, the data collected during the Wottazella program in Uganda came from radio call-in responses, which were turned into infographics. In Mali, a documentary video on faecal sludge management was used as evidence with local government officials to resource a wastewater treatment plant. In India, the case focused on budget tracking included the process for data collection and use, which proved to be a capacity-building element in itself – collecting information jointly helped put things into context and prioritize needs. Data and evidence helped communities decide on advocacy agendas and raised prominence of a particular issue.

Institutionalising the use of evidence for decision-making

People understood the value of data and evidence for advocacy, and this became institutionalized with governments, civil society organisations and others involved in the decision-making process. In Laikipia County, Kenya, water-quality data collection was done in collaboration with the government. The Staff from the County were trained in digital data collection; information about water-point functionality was collected through a joint survey. The government recognized the value and importance of real-time data for decision-making. In another case, the perspective of the service provider and the users changed elevating the use of data for decision-making.

⁹ See <https://watershed.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Changes-in-the-civic-space-for-water-sanitation-and-sexual-health-rights.pdf>

4. Recommendations

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPLICATE THE PROCESS

Advocacy strategies are essential. Especially if you are collaborating with other organisations, they are critical in creating

- A shared vision of what each organisation wants to achieve
- Communicating the goals of the partnership to others

To influence decision-making, advocates must produce evidence. With evidence it will be difficult for anyone to disprove or challenge the messages, requests and/or demands to decision-makers.

Use different methods to gather, produce and disseminate evidence (e.g. meetings, radio campaign and water-quality testing) to complement each other and make your case for advocacy stronger. Radio and SMS are still very common in many countries, and it is an effective way of gathering data. A traditional survey is as costly or even more expensive than this method.

Revise advocacy strategies on a yearly basis. Advocacy can be a process of trial and error and adapting approaches when they are unsuccessful. Data-advocacy should be a continuous process. Provide space for consistent review and adaptation. Build in moments in time to analyze progress. Be opportunistic and use various advocacy approaches and tools. Just developing an output such as a policy brief won't make a change, even if the target audience asked for it. It is one piece of a larger influencing and advocacy strategy.

Dialogue works. Local governments can be empowered through trainings and knowledge sharing that can help them identify issues and possible interventions based on science and seek remedies through planning and advocacy. In many places local government is delegated the responsibility of planning for WASH services and water management without empowering them with relevant capacities to address these issues.

Field visits are powerful. If possible, organise a field visit with decision-makers to see the issue first-hand. Field visits provide the opportunity for government officials and other decision makers to link data, information and statistics to citizens and situations on the ground.

The way the information is presented makes a difference. Therefore, you want the data to be understood and useable. Targeted communication of data and evidence

is an effective component of advocacy. Adapt data and evidence to the audience, decision-maker and what you want to achieve. A communications person on your team is needed to help support this. Simplify the data for ease of understanding through visuals.

Do not make the process of data collection and analysis more complex than needed. All stakeholders including government and CSOs want to hear simple, actionable messages. It is important to 'speak the language' of the decision-maker.

Advocating for change can take years to accomplish. It is important to identify small steps (objectives) to reach your goal and document small achievements over time. This is important to maintain momentum as well as to demonstrate progress. This can be done through quarterly reporting, outcome harvesting and regular review of theories of change.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE AND PARTICIPATION

The recommendations focus specifically on inclusion and participation as this is sometimes one of the most difficult areas.

- The entire process of data to decision-making should be inclusive, participatory and multi-stakeholder. The team composition should have the skill sets to accommodate the process.
- Implement a participatory means of data collection and evidence generation to push the agenda and ownership of the data. This includes involving the local population in data collection – improving their capacity and ownership.
- Create an enabling environment where NGOs, CSOs, local government institutions and policy-makers come together throughout the data to decision-making journey and address the real need of the poorest.
- Work together with government throughout the process including data collection. Government ownership of data is very crucial and is the first step towards change.
- Include partners who occupy and engage in other thematic areas outside WASH and WRM.
- Media can play an important role in the data to decision-making process.
- Find common ground with decision-makers. Present the evidence you have in a way that addresses what they find important.



SOURCE: IRC, KENYA

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Questionnaire: Watershed interviews

June 2020

Title paper:

From Data and Evidence to Decision-Making: how civil society can effectively influence policies, budgets and more.
Experiences from Watershed empowering citizens programme

Background:

The focus of this paper is to share insights from the 'Watershed programme' on how to advocate and influence decision-making through effective use of data and evidence. Through analysis of case studies from each Watershed Work Package and the information collected from the interviews, this paper will capture learnings and identify patterns around how CSOs and NGOs can effectively influence policies and decision-making by using data and evidence. The paper will give a theoretical outline of advocacy and advocacy strategies; discuss the process of using data for decision-making; and share successful case studies from the various Work Packages. The questions contained below provide additional information on the case studies, which will be used for analysis across the Watershed programme to identify trends and/or commonalities in the process for achieving change in policies, budgets, citizen engagement, etc.

The paper is being written by Elynn, Rajashi and Evita under the learning trajectories for Advocacy and Data for Evidence.

Questionnaire for Work Package [...]

Date shared: [...]

CASE STUDY

Selected case study

QUESTIONS

Category: Case study

1. Please provide an in-depth description of the case study as mentioned above.
2. Please include here any available links to documentation related to the case study (these can also be provided as an attachment to this questionnaire).
3. Please explain why you think this case study is a good and/or compelling example to demonstrate the process of using data and evidence for advocacy and decision-making?

Category: Process, from data and evidence to decision-making

4. Please describe here the step-by-step process on how data and evidence were used to influence decision-making. (For example, data collected; problem identified; evidence shared with decision-maker; policies, legislation or budgets changed.)

Category: Data and evidence

5. Was the advocacy presented in this case study based on data/evidence? If so, what kind of data did you use and how did you gather it? If not, why? (Collect new data, use existing data)

6. Describe the process and approach for data use and the relationship to your identified advocacy issue. Did you identify your advocacy issue because of the data collected or did you gather the data to support your advocacy issue?

7. Explain the role that data played in achieving the outcome. Would you have been able to make the advocacy case and achieve the policy change without the data?

Category: Advocacy

8. Please explain how this case study is linked to your Work Package's Theory of Change or Advocacy Strategy?

Category: Other

9. The purpose of this paper is to share insights from the Watershed programme on how to advocate and influence decision-making through effective use of data and evidence. What would you recommend to other stakeholder (NGOs/CSOs/Government) in this process as takeaways?

10. Is there anything that we did not mention but that you would like to share for the paper?

CASE TITLE: Revision of Pro-Poor Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh**COUNTRY:** Bangladesh **LEVEL:** National

CASE DESCRIPTION: The revision of the pro-poor strategy aligns with the pledge to leave no one behind as stated in the SDGs and creates a provision of 100% subsidy to WASH services for the poorest and marginalised and to support achievement of SDG 6.1 & 6.2. The revision process (June 2019 - June 2020) created space for WASH sector actors, CSOs and WASH networks to actively participate and provide recommendations based on the reality on the ground.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Report on Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2019 for 2016
- Citizens participation meeting minutes

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Sent a formal letter to the Senior Secretary of the LGD, MoLGRD&C for the revision of the Pro-Poor Strategy to align with SDG 6
- Organized working committee meetings and consultations
- WaterAid jointly with the Policy Support Branch (PSB) of LGD and MoLGRD&C initiated consultations on the strategy to get reflections from WASH Networks and CSOs
- Budget tracking and citizen empowerment at grassroots level.

OUTCOMES:

- National Working Committee (NWC) was formed by LGD to review and update the strategy
- During the national level consultation, held October 2019, representatives from WASH Sector, CSOs, LGIs and other stakeholders provided their comments for finalizing the strategy, then submitted to the NFWSS for approval.
- Government creation of a platform for ongoing CSO engagement with decision-makers for planning and policy making
- In June 2020, the revised 'Pro-Poor Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Bangladesh' was approved and made publicly available.

CASE TITLE: Inclusive budgets that include the most vulnerable in Bangladesh**COUNTRY:** Bangladesh **LEVEL:** Sub-national/District

CASE DESCRIPTION: Budget-monitoring tools were used to track the allocation and utilization of the WASH budget in Bhola focusing on excluded people.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Budget analysis (budget allocation and utilization of Union Parishads)
- Census report data and social mapping of the WASH situation in 2 Unions
- Social mapping findings in 2 Unions.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Training for local CSOs on budget tracking and effective participation in budget discussions with local government
- Local CSOs (WMCC and NN) participated in the budget-tracking process of the Union Parishad.
- CSO participation at Upazila and Union level WASH Standing Committee and IWRM Committee meetings
- CSOs advocated to Union and Upazila Parishad and DPHE, BRDB and LGED
- CSOs participated in Union Parishads, organised open budget dialogue representing the voice of marginalised population to influence annual budgets.

OUTCOMES:

- Between 5 May and 30 May 2019, 9 Union Parishads in Bhola Sadar Upazila allocated separate WASH budget lines for women, the disabled and marginalised people – 27% of their total WASH budget.
- An increase in the WASH budget by 51% in 6 Unions in FY 2019-20 compared to FY 2018-19 where total WASH budget allocated 16,221,000 BDT in 9 Unions of Bhola Sadar Upazila.

CASE TITLE: Changes in water quality in Tarkwa Municipality**COUNTRY:** Ghana **LEVEL:** Sub-national/District

CASE DESCRIPTION: Water-quality testing was done along the Ankobra river and other sources of drinking water within the basin to demonstrate the heavy pollution and faecal contamination and used to lobby the Municipal Assembly for improved IWRM/WASH services.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Water-quality testing and analysis
- Primary data surveys on sanitation, water quality and waste disposal
- Technical Brief – Policies and Regulations on IWRM and WASH, Climate Change Adaptation
- Report on Policy Gaps Inhibiting Implementation of More Integrated Water Resource Management Based WASH Service Delivery.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Data collection in collaboration with The Water Resource Commission
- Watershed team analysed the data and turned it into a report used as evidence of the pollution and faecal contamination of the Ankobra river basin.
- Held meetings with community leaders, community members and the Municipal Assembly to discuss the report findings and agree on next steps.
- Ghana WASH Journalists Network (GWJN) with HFFG and Conservation Foundation held radio programs
- Face to face meetings with Districts – community participation in town hall meetings with encouragement from community outreach workers.

OUTCOMES:

- The Minister of Sanitation and Water Resource called on the Water Resource Commission to brief her on the way forward following the publication of the water-quality testing results by a journalist in one of the national newspapers.
- The Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipal Assembly immediately drilled a borehole for one of the communities where there is a chop bar (restaurant) where some travellers stop to eat.

CASE TITLE: Kajiado County water master plan and associated budget**COUNTRY:** Kenya **LEVEL:** Sub-national/District

CASE DESCRIPTION: The project sought to demonstrate to the county government the data gaps that exist and the consequences of the data gaps to decision-making, reinforcing the suffering of marginalised communities or regions.

EVIDENCE USED:

- GIS data
- Water-point and water-resource mapping
- Desk reviews
- Briefing paper
- Policy brief

Note: No new data was collected from the field; all data used came from primary data already collected.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- The Watershed consortium held a workshop with government officers on evaluating the distribution, access and conditions of water points and water resources in Kajiado County
- NIA and partners analysed the distribution of water points in the sub counties vs the population in those sub counties
- Data visualization
- Information sharing with government and stakeholders in the county WASH/WRM forums
- Direct meetings with government officers
- Policy briefs and briefing papers were written and shared with government.
- Country water policy and budget influencing activities.

OUTCOMES:

- The Kajiado County government proposed and budgeted to support the Kajiado county water point mapping followed by a water master plan in their annual plan.
- On 13 May 2019, in a meeting between top executives of Kajiado County partners and Watershed partners, the Chief Officer of the Department of Water, Environment and Natural Resources announced the plan for the County to start a process of developing a County Water Masterplan. This activity was further included in the County budget appropriations for the new financial year to be considered and approved by the County assembly.

CASE DESCRIPTION: In July 2019, the Economic and Social Rights Centre (Hakijamii), a national institution partner to KEWASNET in the election monitoring process, deployed data collected through the election monitoring at national level in the Universal Periodic Review report by non-state actors.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Manifestos and pledges of the ruling Jubilee party and governors of Nairobi, Kajiado and Laikipia
- Water and Natural Resources Scorecard Laikipia East Sub County
- County Government of Laikipia website (projects)
- Impact report, presented annually by the regulator – Water services regulatory board was the primary source of data
- Public statements by county governors
- Kajiado county government website
- News and media stories
- Water Sector Trust Fund brief.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Data collection in collaboration with the authorities responsible for service delivery (including the line ministries, county departments and water sector agencies)
- Developed a WRM and WASH monitoring tool
- November 2017 and May 2018, Watershed partners, local CSO and county representatives from the water department met for a data-mining exercise to update RSR monitoring frameworks for three counties and national pages.
- Collation and synthesis of election promises for WASH and WRM made during pre-election period and following up on level of performance by the elected leadership in fulfilling these promises.

OUTCOMES:

- KEWASNET and Hakijamii were requested to document the progress towards Kenya’s fulfilment of its obligations under the universal periodic review (UPR) process. Having worked jointly to collect the facts and update the record of performance at national level, the derivative data was used as a main point of reference for updating the UPR CSO country report. In particular, data on performance of implementation of the Water Act 2016, the country’s development blueprint (Vision 2030) and improvement of sanitation services.
- The ministry of foreign affairs, being the prime agent on behalf of the Government of Kenya, engaged all line ministries to respond to the issues raised in the CSO submission. The line ministries responded with statements of commitment for onward actions that were then captured in the official country report by the Kenya delegation.

CASE DESCRIPTION: Watershed partners generated, validated and documented complete and reliable data on Water Quality from water sources that were shared via a reliable online platform to inform (1) water policy development and implementation; (2) water services monitoring; (3) regulation of water service providers; (4) other uses and to learn the requirements for managing and implementing water quality monitoring.

Water Quality Mapping survey was done to increase availability and access to reliable and quality data on water quality, functionality and user satisfaction for informed decision-making in Laikipia.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Water-Quality Mapping survey
- Combined data from Laikipia County water-quality monitoring pilot in 2018 and the World Bank Rural Metrics Mapping, using the Rural Water Indicator Global Framework (RWIGF)
- Questionnaires
- Documentation report
- Lumen visualization dashboard.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- A ‘Technical Committee’ involving water sector stakeholders was constituted who discussed the ‘data needs’.
- Ongoing dialogues and meetings with the County government
- The Staff from the County were trained in digital data collection and information about water-point functionality was collected through a joint survey.
- The information was collated and key findings – e.g. non-functional water points, unserved families, frequency of breakdown, pollutes points etc. – was shared with all stakeholders, in the presence of the minister.

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OUTCOMES:

- On 16 May 2018, the County Government Department of Water, Environment and Natural Resources, and the Water Resources Authority formed a technical team comprising sector players from the county Department of Water, Health and the Water Resources Authority. The team developed a road map to support the identification of data gaps in water quality within Laikipia County
- County government agreed to the need for updated information and to participate in joint data collection about WASH services.
- Water-quality monitoring was captured as an annual activity in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) for 2018-2022.
- County agreed to periodically budget for water-quality monitoring and use the data to inform implementation of water projects in the county.

CASE TITLE: Gram Panchayat Develop Plan (GDP) planning and budgeting process Odisha

COUNTRY: India LEVEL: Sub-national/District

CASE DESCRIPTION: Water-quality testing and surveying

On 15 August 2019, the Gram Sabha of Takiria Berhampur approved a water-security plan for Takiria Berhampur revenue village, Kanamana Panchayat, that will inform planning and decision-making on WASH and water-security issues in the village.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Primary data:
 - Water-point baseline surveys
 - Household surveys
 - Pre and post monsoon water-quality surveys
 - Tikiria village water-quality map
- Life cycle cost assessments and budget tracking data.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Conducted baseline surveys of water points used for drinking water and sanitation services
- In 2017, Gram Utthan supported by Akvo, IRC and WISA conducted household surveys on coverage, access issues of water supply, institutional roles, tariffs, installation and maintenance issues and water quality
- In May 2018, Wetlands International South Asia (WISA) and Arid Communities and Technologies (ACT) trained Gram Utthan on dugwell and pond surveys
- Pre-monsoon and post monsoon surveys of dugwells and ponds were carried out by Gram Utthan with the help of local CSOs for the entire Tampara basin to understand water quality
- Analysed the data and prepared a water quality map for Tikiria village
- Capacity development on water security themes and how to identify/collect site-specific hydrological evidence
- In November 2019, the Village CSOs of Tikiria Berhampur and Sarpanch, Kanamana Panchayat used a visit by Jal Jeevan Mission team to demand for a water source for Tikiria Berhampur village which had water quality and quantity problems
- Capacity development on budget tracking and life cycle cost assessment with partners and local and state level CSOs for national and state rural drinking water supply and sanitation schemes
- CSOs demanded transparency of budgets and accessing water supply scheme and sanitation budgets.

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OUTCOMES:

- In December 2018 and January 2019, village CSOs prepared water-security plans for Tikiria. The VWSC, PRIs and community mapped the land use, then discussed and identified strategies for water safety, water-source sustainability, service improvement, and operation and maintenance for Tikiria Berhampur. The finalised plan for Tikiria was approved on 15 August 2019 in the Gram Sabha meeting.
- In January 2019, the local government of Kanamana highlighted the issue of high TDS to the Odisha Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department (RWSS).
- RWSS conducted the tests of water samples twice in 2019 in January and June to see if the high TDS levels were seasonal or permanent. Four points with high fluoride were identified and subsequently sealed.
- PRI and Village Development Committee demanded for improved WASH service levels during the Jal Jeevan Mission visit October 2019
- RWSS scoped new water sources in the village in February 2020 culminating in successful identification of source.
- On 2 January 2019, the Junior Engineer of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation department of Chatrapur Block, Ganjam District, Odisha acknowledged the need for regular water-quality testing to check for fluoride and chloride contamination in Tikiria Behrampur Revenue Village followed by RWSS conducting water-quality testing from 16 water points in this Revenue Village to monitor these water points.
- On 15 August 2019, the Gram Sabha of Tikiria Berhampur approved a water-security plan for Tikiria Berhampur Revenue Village, Kanamana Panchayat, to inform planning and decision-making on WASH and water security issues in the village.
- RWSS identified a new water source and successfully drilled 3 new bore wells in February 2020 leading to the implementation of the BASUDHA Rural Piped Water Supply scheme..

CASE TITLE: Local and national level budget tracking in India

COUNTRY: India **LEVEL:** Sub-national/District

CASE DESCRIPTION: This case study captures the process of capacity building of CSOs on budget tracking for WASH in two districts (Bihar and Odisha) and the use of the data from the Gram Panchayat (GP) to the district to inform policy at the state and national level. It also covers building capacities of partners on government planning process, budgets, etc. to identify systemic bottlenecks.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Budget tracking data collected in two states

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- (Gender-) inclusive capacity building with partners and CSOs on planning process down to the GP level focusing on institutions, programmes for WASH in the respective states
- Technical support via phone on budget data collection exercises
- In person joint meetings with government officials
- Budget analysis with all stakeholders in the room on unspent funding, identifying bottlenecks for utilizing funds, information dissemination, challenges, sharing across states
- National level workshop in Delhi on decentralized budget tracking and finance done with WaterAid in 2019.

OUTCOMES:

- Increase in CSO engagement with and outreach to government officials
- Government awareness of key bottlenecks in utilizing funds, information dissemination and information sharing across states
- State level – IRC and CBGA were invited for closed group meeting with Department of Drinking Water and Panchayati Raj and Odisha State Rural Water Policy on finance.
- Increased capacity of partners and CSOs on budget issues including how to engage with government
- Increased awareness of partners on including marginalised communities in the planning processes at the local government level and in capacity building workshops.

CASE DESCRIPTION: The case study demonstrates that having a clear and common advocacy strategy with partner organisations clarifies targets, processes, and produces results including

- Increased ability of WASH sector actors to talk about finance and budget transparency within and outside the WASH sector and engage actively and effectively in financing discussions.
- Created awareness on the need to improve the enabling environment to attract new and more smartly allocated finance.
- Transparency, accountability and budgets have increased in specific areas.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Position and working papers using district and country level qualitative information and analysis
- (Grey) literature review including financial assessments and country-scoping studies
- Research on effective public financial management and evidence from the countries where IRC, Water.org and World Bank work.
- World Bank data regarding governance and finance on urban water supply and sanitation
- IRC data on rural water supply and sanitation.
- Water.org data on low-income household investments as well as repayment rates in 13 countries
- Country case studies
- JMP (UNICEF), GLAAS (WHO), OECD data sets and global reports.
- Interviews with experts at all levels.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- 2016 First joint advocacy strategy with Water.org and joint presentations at Stockholm Water Week.
- 2017 First publication for Ministers Meeting at SWA Spring meeting, joint sessions in Stockholm and engagement with End Water Poverty and CSOs' participation at SWA meetings.
- 2018 Revision of advocacy strategy and organisation of session at WWF in Brazil, first bilateral meeting in Stockholm, preparation of CSOS for SWA meetings and supporting networks of CSOs on finance.
- Water.org and IRC present on finance-focused webinars
- 2019 Revision of advocacy strategy, second publication written with World Bank for Ministers Meeting Sessions at Stockholm (public and bi-lateral).
- Launch of WASH Systems Academy building blocks course, including the finance component.
- Preparation with coalition of CSOs on finance messages for Finance Ministers Meetings.

OUTCOMES:

- Watershed staff from Mali and Bangladesh elected SWA CSO representatives.
- 2018/2019/2020 SWA implemented a series of webinars on the topic that featured finance-related cases, challenges and good practices generating (more) evidence and enhancing awareness among the broader SWA partnership.
- Kevin Rudd, SWA High Level Chair, on 4 April 2019 in San Jose, Costa Rica, during the opening session of the SWA Sector Ministers meeting recommended that all Ministers with responsibilities for WASH read the working paper 'Mobilising finance for WASH: getting the foundations right' for inspiration and guidance on WASH sector funding with leaving no one behind.
- SWA partnership adopted common language around finance, addressing most of the issues identified in the advocacy strategy.
- Sanitation and Water for All included sector finance as one of its three key objectives in its new strategy.
- SWA team developed a Handbook as a tool Finance Ministers could use to develop financing solutions for their WASH challenges.

CASE TITLE: Wastewater Treatment in Bamako**COUNTRY:** Mali **LEVEL:** Sub-national/District**CASE DESCRIPTION:** The Watershed Mali team and other partners advocated to improve wastewater treatment in Bamako and monitored key recommendations from the process. This included meetings with parliamentarians to discuss the plan for resolution and lobbying the national budget for this funding. This resulted in budget allocation for the wastewater treatment plant.**EVIDENCE USED:**

- Study on the diagnostic of the bottlenecks in management and waste transportation in the district of Bamako
- Study on the level of satisfaction of users of WASH services
- Production of an analysis note on the share of budget allocated to the water-sanitation sector
- Analysis note on the Bamako sanitation master plan
- Documentary video on the problem of managing sludge in the Bamako district.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Deputies paid field visits to inquire into the obvious and to question the government.
- Capacity building of CSOs, media, parliamentarians
- Creation of a CSOs pressure group for lobbying and advocacy in Bamako
- Evidence collection on bottlenecks in wastewater management and transportation and WASH services user satisfaction
- Data analysis and report writing on budget allocation
- Field visits with the parliamentarians.

OUTCOMES:

- MPs, who did field visits, called upon the Minister of Water, Minister of Sanitation at the National Assembly to allocate budget to secure the different sites
- Media coverage of key messages
- National budget allocation (4 milliards FCFA) for a wastewater treatment plant in Bamako.

CASE TITLE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA) 50/30 commitment and WASH Strategy**COUNTRY:** Netherlands **LEVEL:** National**CASE DESCRIPTION:** The Watershed Netherlands work package used the 50/30 commitment and WASH Strategy to hold the Dutch Government accountable annually and to advise them on reaching their targets.**EVIDENCE USED:**

- Reports and publications of the Dutch Ministry including their policy documents in which they described their commitments, and annual reports
- Publication outlining a financial framework for the implementation of the WASH strategy.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Meetings and insider dialogues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Lobbying Dutch Members of Parliament (MPs)
- Organising a campaign
- Writing blogs.

OUTCOMES:

- MPs presented a motion that pledged for a credible plan of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to achieve its results
- The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed a plan to achieve its 50/30 commitment.

CASE DESCRIPTION: Focus of the case study is about inclusive accountability, citizen participation and increasing dialogue between citizens and local government officials.

EVIDENCE USED:

- Radio programs and SMS responses from radio listeners
- Infographic providing an overview of the responses from the radio programs
- Water-quality testing results.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES:

- Conducted a workshop to define radio show poll questions with NGOs working on the Watershed program, CSOs, members of the government from MWE, district water officers, individuals from the sub-county level LC-III, lower level CBOs, village women's groups, representatives from the media
- Held interactive radio shows airing one question per week and collected listener replies by SMS
- Analysis of the responses and feedback through another radio show
- Designed and shared infographics that outline the data (analysed listener responses)
- One-on-one meetings with technical staff, District LCV and influential council members to share results
- Discussions with decision-makers after the radio program on creating action for change
- Barazzas village meetings
- Sub-county dialogues
- Water-quality testing.

OUTCOMES:

- District officer participation in the radio program with call-in option where the head of department and official can respond
- District water officer was designing a toilet for market that didn't include provisions for people with disabilities, but the radio program brought this issue forward – many people with disabilities visit the market and this changed the mind of the decision-maker to change future toilet designs.

Watershed

empowering citizens



SOURCE: IRC, BURKINA FASO



Ministry of Foreign Affairs