



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE END-EVALUATION OF WATERSHED

11 December 2020

Dear evaluation team,

The Watershed team would like to thank you for a good and thorough evaluation report. We especially appreciate how you have adapted to the COVID-19 impact on travel and on the work done in the country with the Watershed team.

In this management response we would like to cover four aspects:

- The Theory of Change approach
- The context analysis
- The balance between prescriptive programmatic tools and consistency across the programme
- The exit strategy

Theory of Change approach

The theory of change (ToC) approach is rightly described as dynamic. The ToCs in the country work packages (WP) were developed by each of the teams and reviewed annually, as part of the monitoring round. The recommendation to review more regularly the programme level ToC, both the diagram with intended outcomes and the causal assumptions, based on the monitoring and ToC revisions at country WP level, has been accepted. The amount of monitoring data generated at WP level was not extensive, but the time reserved for analysis, sensemaking and interpretation at programme level, was considerable. We have therefore focused on adjustments of planning at WP level - as this is the level where planning takes place, and used the programme level ToC more as a tool to guide our high-level Watershed vision.

The sequence monitoring -> ToC review -> planning, with the purposes of monitoring first and foremost, learning and steering, with accountability as third purpose, was a very good decision. At WP level, it enabled the teams to use their own monitoring data and decide on direction and priorities themselves.

The context analysis

The context analysis guidelines in the inception phase (developed by the consortium monitoring team, with inputs and feedback from many colleagues from the country WPs) included guiding questions on diversity, equity/inequality, gender issues, opportunities and barriers. However, the context analyses (which were mostly assigned to consultants by each WP) did not lead to a deeper understanding in all the WP teams of who the excluded groups are in their implementation area or their main barriers for social inclusion. This triggers thinking about southern ownership vs programme-level-led guidance on what the focus of a programme should

be. Social inclusion continues to require more and stronger encouragement from the leadership in a programme, because socially excluded groups (by definition) do not have a place at the table.

Balance between prescriptive programmatic tools and consistency across the programme

The prescriptive programmatic tools used in Watershed were: the Terms of Reference for the context analysis, the methodology to arrive at a theory of change, the reporting system (as per contractual agreement with DGIS), the capacity self-assessment methodology, the outcome harvesting methodology and the process to arrive at advocacy strategies. The four consortium members were also active partners in the countries in which they worked, and their budget envelopes were known in advance.

The non-prescriptive aspects, which were left up to the country teams include: the development of their own ToC, the outcomes, the outputs, the annual changes to the ToC and targets, the choice of local partners, what capacity strengthening areas to pursue, what advocacy strategies to develop and what learning trajectories to engage with. Attendance at regional and international events was also based on submission of abstracts and approval by the event organisers. Based on the budget envelopes the partners decided on their annual activities and the amount per local partner. After the second year, some partners had spent above budget, others below and budgets were constantly shifting to finance the activities, including additional ones.

Watershed implementation has always been a balancing act between ensuring consistency of approaches across the programme and defining the programmatic needs within a decentralised management set-up. Various partners inside and outside of Watershed have critiqued decisions made both on the approach and on the subject matter of lobby and advocacy (L&A). Should a more confrontational approach have been taken? Why has the private sector not been involved more? What about corruption? Etc. While these are valid questions, the decentralised nature of the project (and the limited funding available) meant that choices had to be made, and that local partners were empowered to make choices that reflected their understanding of the local context.

The exit strategy

The evaluation report mentions the weaknesses of the fundraising work package and - related to that - the weak exit strategy. First, we would like to mention that an important goal of the fundraising WP was to strengthen capacity at country level for L&A fundraising. Unfortunately, this was not really picked up by the country teams. Secondly, we envisaged, right from the start, that for actual strengthening of L&A capacity of civil society, five years is too short. Watershed always expected to be a 10-year programme as mentioned in almost every annual report. In hindsight, one can argue that we should have thought of a more aggressive fundraising strategy in case funding would not continue. In this context, it is also relevant to mention that the landscape for funding of lobby and advocacy for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the water sector is almost non-existent. This made us indeed rather reliant and dependent on the DGIS funding. At the moment, there is only the small Power of Voices (DGIS funded) programme that includes lobby and advocacy in Bangladesh and a small research-oriented programme in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya funded by a private donor.

Most of the civil society and democracy funding opportunities often do not consider water and sanitation to be needing this type of funds, because this sector is perceived mainly as

technocratic and it is a government's duty to provide water and sanitation services. But with the adoption of the Human Right to Water in 2010, and a strong civil society capacitated to voice citizens demands, we work on changing this perception.

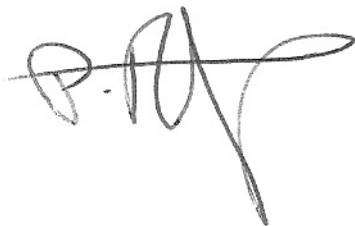
Overall, we are very pleased that the evidence-based advocacy capacities of all partners have been enhanced by Watershed. The CSOs and government partners will continue to put these capacities into practice, as they have experienced that evidence-based advocacy is an effective approach in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and water resource management (WRM) sectors.

In the light of continuing L&A for WASH and WRM, the Watershed team agrees with the recommendation for a stronger, clear and systematic communications strategy, particularly at country level, to showcase successes more strongly to the international donors and to partners operating locally. The current Legacy Campaign aims at exactly doing this: all (former) Watershed partners are to use the communication materials for continued advocacy and fundraising to support the policy influencing for better WASH and WRM services.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Moriarty

Chair Watershed Board/CEO IRC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Moriarty', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.