Dear Colleagues,

The fourth WASH UP is already here and also the last WASH UP for 2014! The WASH UP has provided an excellent platform for sharing key learnings and insights from the programmes throughout our countries. It is mainly a platform for sharing with all staff in our partner organisations worldwide, but also we see it being shared outside. After the first WASH UP, the HR person from Simavi came up to me and said “now I finally understand what the WASH Alliance is doing. It is so interesting!”

“In the first 3 years of our programme we have reached 361,000 people with sanitation and 286,000 with water.”

2014 has been a very interesting year. In the first 3 years of our programme we have reached 361,000 people with sanitation and 286,000 with water. Just imagine, so many thousands of women that can lead a dignified life with a toilet, not hiding after the dark in the bushes. So many more thousands of girls that don’t drop out of school! So many more families that have more days at work and thus more income, because they are not ill from diarrhea.

We can be proud of this achievement. But at the same time this is not a reason for complacency! There are still 2.5 billion people that deserve our support for a dignified life, and that can’t be served by the traditional methods of building infrastructure, which are neither sustainable, nor scalable.

very same achievements of the last 3 years should inspire us to continue, to accelerate, make us wonder how we can improve our work, learn from each other, adapt to the changing world around us, and aim at reducing the costs of water and sanitation for our clients. It is not enough to build water infrastructure and toilets, as this work would never keep up with population growth. Therefore we should continue on our path of innovation, to work on systems change, assisting the public sector and the private sector around us, so that they know their role and are equipped to play their role in WASH. And we have to continue establishing and maintaining multistakeholder platforms, in which all stakeholders work together, as nobody can address the WASH challenge alone. We are on the right path of building systems. Our intermediary outcomes show that:

• we have 13 institutionalised credit products
• we trained 661 people in budget tracking
• we have increased the public budget in 5 countries
• many organisations adopted key elements of environmental sustainability and also brought these in practice
• many multistakeholder structures were set up, well above target, showing that we can work together in the field,
• and the average cost of providing water and sanitation by the Alliance was 53 euro per person, and we will have to aim for it to come down further.

2014 is also the year in which the countries have been developing their assets further. In the annually recurring international event in September – for me always the highlight of our WASH Alliance year – the country coordinators shared the ‘pearls’ from their country. It was then that I realized how far we have come from 2011. How much we have become a Multi-National WASH Alliance with a shared vision and a shared approach.

Above all, 2014 has also been the year to strategise our future. We have developed a strategic plan for the Dutch WASH Alliance and come to the conclusion that together we stand stronger than alone. The added value of operating as a multinational alliance rather than as separate organisations or separate country alliances is seen in the shared learning possibilities across countries, in developing best practices and continuously adapting to a changing world together. It is also seen in joint lobby and advocacy, linking the national experiences to the international reality.

Now, with the end of 2014 approaching, we are entering the last year of our programme. It will be hard work – and fun! – to keep on improving our current work in this last year. The better our results, the more we build up our assets, the more we learn from each other, and the more we can reduce the average price down from the current 33 euro’s, the more chances we have for being able to develop new partnerships after 2015. 2015 will be the year of implementing our strategic plan and transforming from WASH Alliance 1.0 to WASH Alliance 2.0.

For now, thank you for all your hard work and inspiration in 2014. Each and every one of you has contributed to providing more people with sustainable WASH services. Thank you for your enthusiasm!

Wishing you and your families a happy and prosperous New Year and for now a good rest and a joyful festive season.

Hanny Maas

About Hanny Maas

Hanny Maas is programme manager of the Dutch WASH Alliance and part of the WASH Alliance Management Unit. In addition to coordinating the programme, Hanny is an important driving force behind our scale and system-thinking.

Training a new generation of sanitation and hygiene officers

In 2015 The Ghana WASH Alliance and University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale start a new undergraduate programme in Environment, Sanitation and Hygiene. With this programme, UDS aims to “train students to acquire knowledge in concepts needed to analyse the interaction between human activities, the environment and human health.”

Looking back at a successful 2014

Dear Colleagues,

The fourth WASH UP is already here and also the last WASH UP for 2014! The WASH UP has provided an excellent platform for sharing key learnings and insights from the programmes throughout our countries. It is mainly a platform for sharing with all staff in our partner organisations worldwide, but also we see it being shared outside. After the first WASH UP, the HR person from Simavi came up to me and said “now I finally understand what the WASH Alliance is doing. It is so interesting!”

“In the first 3 years of our programme we have reached 361,000 people with sanitation and 286,000 with water.”

2014 has been a very interesting year. In the first 3 years of our programme we have reached 361,000 people with sanitation and 286,000 with water. Just imagine, so many thousands of women that can lead a dignified life with a toilet, not hiding after the dark in the bushes. So many more thousands of girls that don’t drop out of school! So many more families that have more days at work and thus more income, because they are not ill from diarrhea.

We can be proud of this achievement. But at the same time this is not a reason for complacency! There are still 2.5 billion people that deserve our support for a dignified life, and that can’t be served by the traditional methods of building infrastructure, which are neither sustainable, nor scalable. These very same achievements of the last 3 years should inspire us to continue, to accelerate, make us wonder how we can improve our work, learn from each other, adapt to the changing world around us, and aim at reducing the costs of water and sanitation for our clients. It is not enough to build water infrastructure and toilets, as this work would never keep up with population growth. Therefore we should continue on our path of innovation, to work on systems change, assisting the public sector and the private sector around us, so that they know their role and are equipped to play their role in WASH. And we have to continue establishing and maintaining multistakeholder platforms, in which all stakeholders work together, as nobody can address the WASH challenge alone. We are on the right path of building systems. Our intermediary outcomes show that:

• we have 13 institutionalised credit products
• we trained 661 people in budget tracking
• we have increased the public budget in 5 countries
• many organisations adopted key elements of environmental sustainability and also brought these in practice
• many multistakeholder structures were set up, well above target, showing that we can work together in the field,
• and the average cost of providing water and sanitation by the Alliance was 53 euro per person, and we will have to aim for it to come down further.

2014 is also the year in which the countries have been developing their assets further. In the annually recurring international event in September – for me always the highlight of our WASH Alliance year – the country coordinators shared the ‘pearls’ from their country. It was then that I realized how far we have come from 2011. How much we have become a Multi-National WASH Alliance with a shared vision and a shared approach.

Above all, 2014 has also been the year to strategise our future. We have developed a strategic plan for the Dutch WASH Alliance and come to the conclusion that together we stand stronger than alone. The added value of operating as a multinational alliance rather than as separate organisations or separate country alliances is seen in the shared learning possibilities across countries, in developing best practices and continuously adapting to a changing world together. It is also seen in joint lobby and advocacy, linking the national experiences to the international reality.

Now, with the end of 2014 approaching, we are entering the last year of our programme. It will be hard work – and fun! – to keep on improving our current work in this last year. The better our results, the more we build up our assets, the more we learn from each other, and the more we can reduce the average price down from the current 33 euro’s, the more chances we have for being able to develop new partnerships after 2015. 2015 will be the year of implementing our strategic plan and transforming from WASH Alliance 1.0 to WASH Alliance 2.0.

For now, thank you for all your hard work and inspiration in 2014. Each and every one of you has contributed to providing more people with sustainable WASH services. Thank you for your enthusiasm!

Wishing you and your families a happy and prosperous New Year and for now a good rest and a joyful festive season.

Hanny Maas

About Hanny Maas

Hanny Maas is programme manager of the Dutch WASH Alliance and part of the WASH Alliance Management Unit. In addition to coordinating the programme, Hanny is an important driving force behind our scale and system-thinking.

Training a new generation of sanitation and hygiene officers

In 2015 The Ghana WASH Alliance and University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale start a new undergraduate programme in Environment, Sanitation and Hygiene. With this programme, UDS aims to "train students to acquire knowledge in concepts needed to analyse the interaction between human activities, the environment and human health."
Testing fluoride in water with the use of a smartphone

Akvo Caddisfly collects and shares drinking water quality data, powered by the best tool for the job – the smartphone.

TESTING DRINKING WATER IN INDIA
An audience gathers around a water pump of a small village in Gujarat (west-India). People are murmuring with their eyes wide open. Some help to activate the pump, others hold a bottle to receive the water coming through it. Our colleagues from Ternup-India pour some water into a capsule. With the use of a smartphone, they take a picture of the capsule - with water recently extracted in it - and proceed to wait patiently. “It will only take a minute” they say. The result is about to be announced. The third row is standing on the tips of their toes and peeking over the shoulders of others waiting for the outcome. After a minute Samuel says, “Fortunately, the water from this pump is fluoride safe.” This scene can be replicated in numerous places around the world where Akvo is working on innovative ways to tackle a serious drinking water testing challenge.

ABOUT AKVO CADDISFLY
Akvo Caddisfly is born out of a non-profit foundation (that builds and supports open source web and mobile tools) and a research lab like Ternup that is dedicated to solving drinking water testing problems. Akvo Caddisfly is a simple, fast, portable and low cost drinking water testing kit that can be used anywhere to quickly analyse the level of fluoride in drinking water by using a smartphone. With Akvo Caddisfly easily testing drinking water is just around the corner. Another functionality that is currently under development, allows water quality data to be accurately mapped and shared online with the use of Akvo FLOW. Both the hardware and software are open source, which will set a new standard in collecting and sharing water quality data.

SIMPLE AND EASY TO USE
One of the main characteristics of Akvo Caddisfly is the simplicity of how the kit works. This allows anyone with a smartphone to do a fast test of the level of fluoride in a water sample. First, you need to fill the reusable test chamber with a sample of water and place the reagent capsule inside it. Once it is closed, you attach it to the phone case on your smartphone and then proceed to run the Caddisfly app. Afterwards, you place the smartphone facedown, and wait a minute until you hear a loud click. In that minute, the smartphone’s camera takes five pictures of the sample. The smartphone’s camera acts as a colourimeter sensor, using the flash to illuminate the sample. The Akvo Caddisfly app analyses the water sample photograph against a calibrated range, giving an accurate and reliable result and displays the fluoride test result on the smartphone’s screen. The smartphone’s GPS accurately identifies the location and the results can be integrated and reported via Akvo FLOW, Akvo’s mobile phone-based field survey tool.

GLOBALLY, OVER 780 MILLION PEOPLE DRINK UNSAFE WATER

Globally, over 780 million people drink unsafe water. In India and elsewhere, fluorosis is a serious health issue and more than 66 million Indians are at risk because they drink water containing fluoride and/or other contaminants such as arsenic or coliform bacteria. According to Onno Ruhl, the country coordinator of the World Bank at the Sanitation Hackathon 2012, “one in every ten deaths in India is due to poor sanitation, this comes down to 768,000 deaths in India every year.”

WASHUP
TACKLING A CRUCIAL AND URGENT NEED

“Global, over 780 million people drink unsafe water.”

“With Akvo Caddisfly easily testing drinking water is just around the corner.”

ABOUT AKVO CADDISFLY

Akvo Caddisfly is born out of a non-profit foundation (that builds and supports open source web and mobile tools) and a research lab like Ternup that is dedicated to solving drinking water testing problems. Akvo Caddisfly is a simple, fast, portable and low cost drinking water testing kit that can be used anywhere to quickly analyse the level of fluoride in drinking water by using a smartphone. With Akvo Caddisfly easily testing drinking water is just around the corner. Another functionality that is currently under development, allows water quality data to be accurately mapped and shared online with the use of Akvo FLOW. Both the hardware and software are open source, which will set a new standard in collecting and sharing water quality data.
FIELD PILOT IN INDIA
In October 2014, the Akvo Caddeisfly team ran a field pilot in cooperation with the Fluoride Action Knowledge Network (FAKN) in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, India. In total 35 different locations were sampled. Each sample was tested using Akvo Caddeisfly on three different types of smartphones. Duplicate water samples were taken and analysed at two different labs to validate the field results. Preliminary results show locally very high levels of fluoride up to 7 – 9 mg/litre. The WHO guideline value (permissible upper limit) for fluoride in drinking water was set at 1.5 mg/liter (1.5 ppm). India lowered this permissible upper limit from 1.5 ppm to 1.0 ppm in 1998. Gujarat is one of India’s states with an estimated 70 -100% of drinking water wells affected by fluoride. When we reported the results, the message really sunk in: people are drinking this day after day, without an alternative for the high levels of fluoride.

“When we reported the results, the message really sunk in: people are drinking this day after day, without an alternative for the high levels of fluoride.”

CHANGING THE FUTURE OF DRINKING WATER QUALITY TESTING
After running and validating the initial fluoride tests in India, Akvo plans to upscale and further realise the potential of the tool. This includes the development of tests for other contaminants (such as arsenic, nitrate, coliform bacteria and iron) and exploring hydrogeological testing, such as pH, electrical conductivity, temperature and water levels.

“This is the bigger picture that we are working on together with our partners.”

The Akvo FLOW dashboard will also grow to support easy online sharing of water quality testing data and fine tune the industrial design, start manufacturing the Caddeisfly kit at scale and setting up distribution channels. Imagine the impact of combining baseline and monitoring surveys on water infrastructure, with water quality and hydrogeological mapping by using one device – a smart phone – and sharing this data online. This is the bigger picture that we are working on together with our partners.

The NEXT STEPS TO MAKE CADDIEFLY A SUCCESS
During the last decades, the international development sector has made a huge contribution in terms of funding, technology, infrastructure and institutional support to provide access to improved drinking water sources. We are now at the point where many people have access to a drinking water source, but still do not know if the water they drink is safe. Caddeisfly tries to set a new standard for solving this issue. In order to make the next steps for improvement Akvo is currently looking for partners and opportunities to improve the technology and support the execution of the 2015-2016 research, development and piloting phases.

What’s your favourite WASH book?
Every WASH UP a DWA staff member shares with us his or her favourite WASH book – to learn by reading! This edition we asked Tamene to reveal his favourite writing.

Why would you recommend this report to us?
This report offers practical solutions to WASH challenges by improving the capacity of practitioners at local level. The report starts at community-level by looking at what can be done by the communities themselves to reduce dependency and to enable them to take action on their own. The modules deal with actual situations as they are based on field-experiences and relevant action researches conducted in the country, different programme implementation experiences inside the country and other parts of the world.

“This report offers practical solutions to WASH challenges by improving the capacity of practitioners at local level.”

What did you learn from it?
My most valuable learning is that I now know how to make an assessment of a community water supply system. This will enable us to come up with more appropriate solutions. The report gives insights into the following topics:

• What we need to look at in different sources;
• What a given community is using to meet the demand of their domestic and productive purposes;
• What problems relate to sanitation & hygiene;
• What other issues exist on water quality and;
• How to manage and finance WASH situations and ways of dealing with them.

About the GLOWS modules
The GLOWS modules are a collaborative effort of different authors under guidance of Jan Teun Visscher who is also the main author. The GLOWS modules have been developed and tested over a period of several years with the support of different organisations including RIPPLE, SNV, MetaMeta, ODI, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, Dutch WASH Alliance, RainFoundation, UNICEF, Addis Ababa, Hawassa and Wolaita Soddo Universities, TVETCs in Hawassa, Soddo and Dilla and Regional and Zonal Water and Health Bureaus in SSNP.

“My most valuable learning is that I now know how to make an assessment of a community water supply system. This will enable us to come up with more appropriate solutions.”

NEWS FROM DUTCH WASH ALLIANCE

ABOUT HANS MERTON
Hans is a programme manager at Akvo and supports the development of new programmes and consortia. So partners can unleash the potential of Akvo RSR, Akvo FLOW, Akvopedia and Akvo OpenData. Hans has more than 25 years experience as a manager and director of programmes and divisions in the field of environmental and water management consultancy and is currently leading the business development of Akvo Caddeisfly.

ABOUT TAMENE CHAKA
Tamene is working for WASH Alliance as the Country Coordinator of the Ethiopian programme. His main tasks include programme development, coordination and capacity building to support the Alliance and its partners to work towards a common vision and mission, capacity development and learning. Tamene has 23 years of experience working for the Ethiopian government and various NGOs, most of which are in the WASH sector.

GLOWS
Learning about Community Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (LCHW) module

NEWS FROM DUTCH WASH ALLIANCE
Learning Trajectory follow-up:
Dipok, Rahi and Abdallah share the first lessons learned from their experiments

In September 2013, the Dutch WASH Alliance launched the Learning Trajectory: a journey made by 17 participants from the Dutch WASH Alliance in which they work and experiment towards a future with sustainable approaches that offer water and sanitation for all.

The Trajectory consists of five phases (design, search, co-create, experiment, reflect & share). We’ve just finished the experiment phase. These past months were all about learning by doing. Experimenting with a new approach or method aimed at reaching scale sustainability and scale within the participants’ respective projects.

The experiments vary from looking for ways to streamline production, unite demand, include the private sector to innovating with wash products. In the previous WASH UP we introduced some of the participants and their experiments to you. In this edition a few of the participants, share some of their first learned lessons.

The full analysis and results of the experiments will be shared in our final LT film and the next WASH UP.
DIPOK CHANDRA ROY
Coordinator Energy and Urban Services Programme at Practical Action in Bangladesh

Experimenting with: The creation of a sustainable value chain for faecal sludge management

What happened? "We’ve signed an agreement with the municipality for 10 decimals of land to use for faecal sludge management, installed a sludge treatment plant to dump and treat sludge, our sweeper group has emptied five pits and one septic tank, and in total we’ve collected 5000 liters of sludge."

Quick lessons learned:
• Strong municipal ties.
  It’s important to have a good relationship with the municipality and other WASH stakeholders. These stakeholders helped leverage local resources such as land or equipment, get the support needed amongst communities and generate demand through community mobilisation.
• Keep innovating until you find low-cost alternatives.
  Most sweeper groups and municipalities don’t have any modern de-sludging equipment at their disposal, as this equipment is quite expensive and high maintenance. That is why it’s important to keep innovating with low cost de-sludging equipment in order to offer a viable alternative.
  By piloting and testing the low cost equipment, you gain more knowledge as well as user experience, which helps you optimise the product.
• Determine a service rate.
  Before you can offer your services, you will first need to determine a service rate based on relevant factors such as latrine type or location. We had hoped to do so by consulting different stakeholders and compare rates from existing alternatives. In this case, there was no standard however, which means that you will have to come up with your own rate. This is a rather time consuming process and requires precision.

MOHAMMED ABDALLAH
Hygiene & Sanitation Officer at Community Life Improvement Programme (CLIP) Ghana

Experimenting with: Improving the sanitation value chain by increasing MFI involvement

What happened? "We’ve set up fifteen savings groups that are operational in ten communities and 109 households have registered with the Tamale Presbyterian Cooperative Credit Union (TPCCU). We’ve trained five masons and they have constructed 10 latrines thus far."

Quick lessons learned:
• Behaviour Change Communication (BCC).
  By using a BCC strategy to create demand for latrines and presenting community members with real life scenarios you target their social status. This makes it easier for community members to relate to the social impacts of open defecation. No one wants to loose face amongst his or her community.
• Presenting the products.
  Because there exists a social hierarchy within the communities, we’ve designed sanitation markets where we demonstrate the various low cost latrine technologies available for all classes. Here, everyone can come and educate themselves on the different latrine options. These markets have been instrumental for the demand creation of latrines.
• Community engagement requires trust.
  When we tried to link a mason from a different community to another one for the construction of latrines, the community members were not cooperating at all and it was very difficult to get the process going. Communities prefer their own masons because they better understand the situation and the community’s preferences, and they are considered to be more flexible about the payments for labour. If you want communities to engage, you will need to make sure there’s trust.
Training a new generation of sanitation and hygiene officers

In 2015 The Ghana WASH Alliance and University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale start a new undergraduate programme in Environment, Sanitation and Hygiene. With this programme, UDS aims to “train students to acquire knowledge in concepts needed to analyse the interaction between human activities, the environment and human health with specific reference to operations and management of household latrines.”

To get a better understanding of this programme, we asked Eric Chimsi to respond to 7 statements about the impact of this initiative:

1. THIS PROGRAMME IS AN ASSET TO EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AND PROFESSIONS IN THE FIELD OF WASH.

YES

In Ghana, Training in Environmental Health and Sanitation starts in colleges known as “School of Hygiene”. The curriculum in these colleges train certificate level products after which they are posted to communities to support in environmental health monitoring and management. Due to insufficient facilities available for higher level training of these professionals, most of the environmental health officers can only continue their education in other study programmes at the universities. The development of this Diploma and BSc study programme at UDS will therefore provide that critical opportunity for professionals to continue training in their area of practice.

2. THIS PROGRAMME WILL GREATLY IMPROVE THE FIELD OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEVELOPMENT.

YES

Because it provides an avenue for the acquisition of higher level skills to better plan and manage environmental health in the communities.

3. WITH THIS PROGRAMME, GRADUATES ARE GUARANTEED TO FIND BETTER JOBS.

YES

The situation is that they necessarily do not find better jobs somewhere, but they gain additional certificates in their area of practice and this helps them improve their job placement. This ensures progression in the ranks and so they are motivated to enrol for higher learning. At the launch of the curriculum development, the university management indicated their close collaboration with stakeholders. Upon completion of the programme, practitioners will be prepped to work in a complex, steeped and dynamic community setting where they will excel in building leadership and supervisory capacities, and will take on leading roles to improve sanitation and hygiene practices.

4. THIS PROGRAMME IS MORE VALUABLE THAN GAINING PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD.

NOT NECESSARILY

It is modelled to provide the professionals with the tools and capacities to undertake good quality assessments and analyses of environmental health situations to improve the strategic management of public health. It therefore strongly complements the experiences gained in the field, which helps the professionals to do a more thorough investigation into public health issues in their localities.

5. THE PROGRAMME’S MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH PROHIBITS STUDENTS FROM DEVELOPING AN EXPERTISE BY LEARNING A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING. THEY DON’T BECOME REAL SPECIALISTS ABOUT SOMETHING SPECIFIC.

YES

Because of this new programme, graduates are more likely to find higher paid jobs in other health sectors thereby causing a brain drain in public health development.

6. THE APPROACH OF THE PROGRAMME IS UNIQUE.

YES

The University for Development Studies is unique in its training process because they use “Problem-based Learning” to train their graduates including the Medical and Allied Sciences students. They run the Trimester system and during each trimester, all students are sent to rural communities on a program called “Third Trimester Field Practice” (TTFP) where each student identifies a real problem and carries out a project to address such a problem. This ends in a TTFF Project Report which is reviewed by assigned supervisors for the award of marks. Students of this new programme will not be exempted from this practice.

7. ABOUT ERIC CHIMSI

A Ghanaian national and a native of the Northern Region. Holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Education from the Cape Coast University in Ghana and an MSc Degree in Managing Rural Development from the University of London’s Centre for Development, Environment and Policy. Based in Tamale and is the Country Coordinator of the Ghana WASH Alliance since 2011 in a working partnership with nine local NGOs, relevant public sector agencies and the UDS. Pioneering the use of the Programmatic Approach to delivering our WASH interventions in partnership with the Dutch WASH Alliance.

WHY DID THE GHANA WASH ALLIANCE AND UDS DEVELOP A NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME?

In today’s rapidly changing world, health issues and health systems have become increasingly more complex. Good health is not merely an outcome of good healthcare services. It is an outcome of the interplay of various factors such as environmental changes, lifestyle, behaviour, demographic, income and education. As a result, the organisational and management systems dealing with health have also become more complex. To work in these systems, health officers need to be equipped with modern management skills and expertise to optimally make use of scarce resources. These changes ask for a more holistic approach to health and health systems, which is why the BSc Environment, Sanitation, and Hygiene was developed.

The programme adopts a multidisciplinary approach, with a focus on enhancing core competencies related to community research intervention, practical, and field-oriented training, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences with relevant stakeholders. Upon completion of the programme, practitioners will be prepared to work in a complex, steeped and dynamic community setting where they will excel through their strengthened leadership and supervisory capacities and will take on leading roles to improve sanitation and hygiene practices.

The programme is expected to start in 2015.
A brilliant failure: how INTAGRAD lost the funds of its sanitation revolving fund

To upscale sanitation and promote good health amongst the rural communities in Tamale, Ghana, INTAGRAD developed a ‘sanitation revolving fund’. During the implementation of the strategy however, it proved quite challenging to actually get the fund revolving.

A NOT SO REVOLVING FUND

The original idea of the sanitation revolving fund was to hand out loans to community members so that they could build their own latrines, and then have them pay back their loan in three payment terms over the course of a year. Once the loans are paid back, a new group can prescribe to the fund. Community members would be selected through a screening and educated on managing a loan.

“We were going to implement this strategy in ten rural communities. When we started with the first three rural communities though, we lost all our money. Community members were screened, educated, and did indeed build their latrines, but come around the first payment deadline we noticed that not every household was able to pay back its part of the loan. By the second deadline, not a single household had the money and by the third deadline, we had to dis-appoint the next group waiting to pre-scribe to the fund because there wasn’t any money. Clearly, there was a flaw in our plan and we had to figure out what it was.”

“Clearly, there was a flaw in our plan and we had to figure out what it was.”

After talking to the community members, we learned that our strategy wasn’t working because:

• The rural communities we selected to implement the strategy did not have enough income to pay back the loan. They’re farmers and live off the yields of their crops. Apparently, there weren’t enough yields that year thus there wasn’t enough money to pay back the loan. While we were aware of their low incomes, we believed the farmers would be committed to paying back the loan once they learned the benefits of having a latrine and were trained on loan management;

• We chose the men, the heads of house, as the receiver of the loan while we should’ve made households share the responsibility and include the women as well;

• The communities weren’t knowledgeable enough about loan management.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

With the newly gained insights we went back to the drawing board, thought things over, and changed a number of key elements:

• Loan as an investment for income generating activities

• Group responsibility To be selected for a loan, community members need to form a group of approximately ten households. These groups appoint a leader, a secretary and a treasurer and they are responsible for the entire loan allocated to the group.

• Inclusion of women Initially we provided the loan to the men because we felt they would have more affiliation with sanitation and the construction work that comes with it. Not only were we mistaken, it also turned out that often the women have petty businesses from their homes, with which they generate a more structural income for the household. That is why we now grant the loan to both the men and women of the households. The women are in charge of the money and run the business, the men have to help the artisans with the construction of the latrines.

“Not only did our brilliant failure ensure that the original vision for the revolving fund has been realised, it has also created new opportunities for entrepreneur-ship and community building.”

• Bi-weekly payments To better monitor the pay back and ensure there are enough funds coming in for the next group, community members have to pay back small amounts of their loan biweekly. Every two weeks, an INTAGRAD officer collects the money and goes over the timetable with the households to check if they are still on schedule. During rainy season for instance, households might fall behind on constructions. If so, the officer will get together with the household to discuss a new plan of action.

• Increasing knowledge The women go through an intensive course on loan and business management.

To prevent community members from depending on their yields to pay back the loans, we no longer provide the loan directly for the construction of latrines. In our new strategy, the loan serves as an investment for the households to start a small business and with the profit generated from that business they can construct latrines. To ensure that the latrines are actually built, the men are required to dig the pit of the latrine before they receive the loan and the progress is closely monitored by the bi-weekly payments.

“Clearly, there was a flaw in our plan and we had to figure out what it was.”

So while each individual household receives part of the loan, all group members share responsibility for the loan management. By doing so, you instil a greater sense of responsibility as each household depends on the others in the group for the loan. If you don’t make the deadline, you fail the group and vice versa. We feel this will encourage households to indeed save up and make their bi-weekly payments.

“The results Currently, we have implemented our new ‘sanitation credit scheme’ in 35 rural communities. We’ve divided our fund of GHS 308,000 amongst them and each group cycle takes up 1.5 years. Since we started with this new scheme in 2012, 650 community members have benefitted from the fund and 450 latrines have been constructed. The women of the households feel empowered and are running good businesses, the communities’ health situation has greatly improved. As of today, there are three communities in which all households are fully serviced with latrines. Not only did our brilliant failure ensure that the original vision for the revolving fund has been realised, it has also created new opportunities for entrepreneurship and community building.”

Amin is the Programme Director of INTAGRAD and has over 11 years of working experience in the development field. He directs and manages all programmes in the three Northern Regions of Ghana, builds and maintains relationships, oversees donor contracts & reports and designs systems to integrate project experiences in the mainstream activities of INTAGRAD.

In his free time, Amin enjoys playing football. His favourite position is defense and he’s specifically fond of the number two jersey.
DORP has been using Akvo RSR since 2012, and recently the project’s field staff received smartphones and were trained to regularly update their activities. In this WASH UP, DORP Bangladesh shares its experiences with us.

**WHY DOES DORP USE AKVO RSR?**

Zobair Hasan: DORP Bangladesh uses Akvo RSR to give regular updates on project activities and increase online visibility. The RSR platform enables DORP to share knowledge and information about best practices and project progress with everyone involved or interested. We can share our progress with donors and other stakeholders on a daily basis and we can measure the success and monitor the progress of our activities from where we are now. Electricity and Internet service do not run smoothly in the rural areas of Bangladesh, so using mobiles for updates is helpful if you need to instantly share information.

**Staff motivation is important to do our activities. The RSR platform helps frontline staff to feel ownership and mid-level management to understand the pathway of each project in the context of the Theory of Change.**

"DORP Bangladesh uses Akvo RSR to give regular updates on project activities and increase online visibility."

**WHAT DO YOU USE UPDATES FOR?**

Zobair: Akvo RSR gives us a visual update on field activities such as campaigns and promotions, WASH service monitoring, lobbying and advocacy, WASH budget monitoring, and capacity strengthening. DORP measures the output of these activities on a regular basis to define how each area is progressing and if this is in line with the targets that have been set. Our central office does a daily follow up on project activities using Akvo RSR and gives feedback to all areas regarding practices.

Updates about project activities provide information about the changes happening at the community level. What we would like to see according to the Theory of Change is that through campaigns and promotional activities, communities become aware of the WASH budget. This leads to a demand for WASH services, which in turn leads to participation in the union budget process.

"Updates about project activities provide information about the changes happening at the community level."

For example, there is an activity in the plan called the WASH Budget Monitoring Club. This is a platform for local communities involved in monthly meetings at Upazila level. A representative from the Department of Public Health Engineering, an Upazila Health & Family Planning Officer or an Upazila Nirbahi Officer should attend this activity as a guest speaker. The RSR updates will make it clear whether there actually was a guest speaker present at the meeting and necessary feedback can be provided in a timely manner. RSR lets us monitor this change in awareness.

**WHO ARE YOU WRITING THE UPDATES FOR?**

Zobair: DORP is writing the updates for all field and central staff to share information about daily activities. WASH Alliance members can read the updates as well and if desired, they can incorporate best practices into their own activities. This is why we share information about budget tracking workshops with them for example. The WASH Alliance members get regular updates of our activities, which they can also share with different network members in other ways such as seminars, workshops and conferences.

"Furthermore, people from other countries involved with Akvo RSR are able to read and learn about the updates instantly."

Furthermore, people from other countries involved with Akvo RSR are able to read and learn about the updates instantly, which can serve as an example for them. Recently, a team of two organisations from Nepal visited Bangladesh to see and learn about our activities in particular budget tracking for their own organisations. A platform like Akvo RSR helps by providing visual outputs of activities and best practices and sharing them in a timely way via a single platform.

"The RSR platform is also very inspiring for our own staff."

Last but not least, the RSR platform is also very inspiring for our own staff when updates are being shared and others get to know about our activities and comment on our best practices.

**Share your story in the next WASH UP!**

For every issue, we strive to collect inspiring articles on how new methods and tools were implemented and which challenges people needed to overcome to reach the success as envisioned.

**Dieuwertje Damen & Jasmijn Besorak via communications@washalliance.nl**