



Socially Sustainable WASH



Simavi is an international non-profit organisation working towards a world in which basic health is accessible to all. Our goal is to structurally improve the basic health of 10 million people in marginalised communities in Africa and Asia by 2020. By doing so, we enable them to build a better existence and break the cycle of poverty. Our experience over the past ninety years has shown us that investing in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is vital for people to be able to lead a healthy life. Therefore we concentrate our efforts in these two areas.

All our programmes are based on three integrated pillars: 1) Empower communities to demand quality services and to practice healthy behaviour; 2) Create a supportive, enabling environment in which all stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities, work together and can be held accountable; 3) Ensure that people use affordable, suitable and sustainable WASH and SRHR services. This is the core of our Theory of Change – it's designed to ensure that everyone involved, from community to governmental level, works together towards realising sustainable improvement of basic health.

Background

A lack of sustainable long-term WASH services has large economic and social impacts. For example, 50,000 water supply infrastructures in Africa are out of order due to lack of maintenance. This represents a failed investment of US\$ 215-360 million and a severe impact on many people's livelihoods and health. If a borehole fails, women may have to resort to walking several hours to collect water each day¹. This situation isn't just confined to Africa - in South Asia at any given time up a quarter of the public water supply systems aren't operational².

Two decades of experience with participatory approaches, decentralisation, cost sharing and technological adaptation have taught us that users of WASH services need to be actively involved in planning, costing, operation and management of services. Demand-driven, community-led approaches deliver better results than the supply-driven, government-led models that prevailed until to the 1980s. Conventional approaches to improve access to WASH services by providing financial subsidies for the construction of facilities do not necessarily result in appropriate usage. User-led approaches have proven to result in: 1) Better performing and more sustainable water supplies that benefit a greater cross section of the population³; 2) Scaling up effective and sustainable sanitation and hygiene behaviour improvements⁴.

The Simavi Approach

Ensuring social readiness for future change and building on a community's own initiatives are important determining factors for user-led approaches in WASH services development. The driving force for successful sustainable development is the aspiration and will for advancement of a community. It is supported by awareness, knowledge and resources from institutions who are willing to fulfil people's rights and implement the necessary policies. Social organisations and institutions are essential for harnessing and directing a community's aspiration, readiness and energies for higher levels of accomplishment. Simavi strives to maximise the readiness of a community for change and therefore works with: 1) Local partners to foster and facilitate social process; 2) The relevant international, national and local governmental agencies to ensure the process is supported with appropriate implementation of laws, public policies, administrative procedures, controls and governmental incentives.

We address the following key areas in our approach to socially sustainable WASH services:

- User organisation
- Multi-stakeholder consultations
- Rural village level management
- Tariff setting
- Urban neighbourhood level management
- Household sanitation
- Latrine types

User organisation

The participation of end users in the design, implementation and operation of the system builds self-esteem, responsibility and ownership. It also ensures end users' support and assistance during the construction and operation of WASH services – and payment of the user fees or financial contributions. It's vital that a community organises itself for this participation to take place efficiently. Local partners, in collaboration with relevant governmental departments, assist projected users and targeted communities before construction begins to strengthen their existing social organisational structures. End users are

“Development is a process, not a programme. Development is an activity of the society as a whole. It can be stimulated, directed or assisted by development programmes, government policies and law. Development strategy should aim to release people's initiative, not to substitute for it.”

Social Development Theory, by Garry Jacobs and Harlan Cleveland

facilitated to set up relevant committees, like a water and sanitation committee or health committee. To guarantee inclusiveness and that every perspective is represented, we take care that committees include representatives of different social groups across lines of gender, age background and social status.

Multi-stakeholder consultations

User committees act as an intermediary between users and designers, implementers and regulators (relevant governmental departments) and the operator of the WASH infrastructure. We train and facilitate the committees to: 1) Be able to assess the basic needs, demands and wishes of their communities; 2) Understand the technical and budgetary service limitations; 3) Understand the relevant government rules and regulations.

Through a consultative multi-stakeholder process facilitated by Simavi and local NGO's, a balance is found between: 1) Technical options and budgetary restrictions from the designers, constructors, and operators; 2) Restrictions based on rules and regulations from the policy makers; 3) Demands, basic needs and wishes from the users. For example, the optimal location and design of water points are jointly discussed and decided upon, based on users' preferences, technical possibilities, budget considerations, regulations and other relevant considerations. Consultations with

the environmental, land use and integrated land and water management sectors should ensure that the possibilities and restrictions related to the use of land and water resources are also considered.

Rural village level management

To achieve sustainable, positive results in the social, cultural and governmental organisational setting of developing countries, Simavi sets up WASH service management systems at the lowest institutional level, just above end user level. This level is often in the position to arrange the village level activities more efficiently and in a more user-friendly manner. The village organisation arranges the basic operation and maintenance of the village level system, resells the water and provides sanitation and hygiene services (e.g. waste collection) to individual users. The costs the village level organisation incurs for arranging this are included in the end user's water tariff. Simavi facilitates the formation and capacity strengthening of WASH service user groups through its local partners.

Tariff setting

An important initial aspect to discuss within the multi stakeholder setting is the tariff setting and the fee collection systems. The operation, maintenance and replacement costs of the WASH services need to be calculated accurately and a financing plan to cover all these costs must be developed to ensure sustainable service delivery. One of the financial sources for financing the operation, maintenance and replacement costs of the service is the user payments for the service (tariffs). The tariffs need to be set at a realistic rate and take into account the carrying capacity of the users. In general users are prepared to pay for WASH services as long as they receive a good service in return. For example, with rural piped water supplies the water can be sold by the operator of the water supply system as bulk water to a village level users organisation. Sanitation or hygiene related services can be provided by, and paid to, the water operator or they can be arranged by a different party. Mobile or digital technologies can support the payment of WASH service fees. This village level system also offers the opportunity to discuss, agree upon and arrange any form of cross subsidy ensuring that the service will also be available to the really poor families. Simavi facilitates the discussions on these aspects between the different stakeholders.

"Human beings are the ultimate resource and ultimate determinant of the development process. It is a process of people becoming more aware of their own creative potentials and taking initiative to realise those potentials. Human awareness, aspiration and attitudes determine society's response to circumstances."

Social Development Theory, by Garry Jacobs and Harlan Cleveland

Urban neighbourhood level management

A priority of Simavi's work in urban areas is to facilitate inhabitants to organise themselves. Urban neighbourhoods

Definitions

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS)

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is an innovative methodology for mobilising communities to completely eliminate open defecation (OD). Communities are facilitated to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of OD and take action. CLTS focuses on changing the attitudes required to ensure communal commitment to household sanitation – investing in community mobilisation rather than in hardware. No subsidy for latrine construction is provided to households; therefore Simavi always complements CLTS programmes with financial support systems like village saving schemes, micro credit and other loan systems in order to help communities overcome financial barriers for the construction of latrines.



WASH Behaviour Change programme

A WASH Behaviour Change programme will support the creation of demand. Once people are convinced they need to make a change in their WASH behaviour, they must have the means to do so, thereby creating a demand for the services to be provided. For a more detailed explanation please see our factsheet about Behaviour Change Communication.

Social Marketing

Social marketing is used to complement the CLTS methodology. Social marketing applies lessons learnt from commercial marketing for the promotion of social goals - in this context to increase hygienic behaviour including the use of latrines. It is a systematic approach to strengthen demand as well as the supply of products such as latrines. It goes beyond marketing alone as it is also concerned with how the product is used after its purchase. The aim is, for example, not only to sell latrines but also to encourage the correct hygienic use and maintenance of latrines.

often already reflect the different social groups, otherwise subgroups can be formed along relevant social lines. These neighbourhood groups are strengthened to enable them to participate in a similar manner as in the rural area context. Although social structures are different in urban areas, in our experience users find improved WASH services of such high importance that they are keen to get organised and support the realisation of a good water supply system, sanitation and hygiene services in their neighbourhood. Experience has taught us that in urban areas water can be sold in bulk, while sanitation and hygiene services can be provided by area-based or neighbourhood-based organisations to reduce the organisational burden of the higher level or citywide WASH service operator. Depending on the social cohesion in the urban areas, we always search for an appropriate manner to stimulate cross subsidy, especially for low-income households.

Household sanitation

To stimulate households to construct or improve their own household latrines, Simavi applies 1) Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) strategies in combination with 2) social sanitation marketing and 3) WASH behaviour change programmes. We use tailor-made, context specific, urban and rural strategies to meet the needs of every community. In urban areas specific attention is given to reach out to house owners and tenants, as each have different interests in sanitation improvements in the house. To stimulate and create investment opportunities we work on developing microcredit lines for households and for entrepreneurs.

Latrine types

The main type of latrine promoted by Simavi is onsite, dry latrines with emptying possibilities. Water-based sewerage systems are not suitable for most developing country situations as these require a sludge water treatment system and use a lot of water, which is often scarce. Simavi always offers several types of latrines, from basic improved pit latrines to more complex and expensive ecosan latrines, in order to suit the demands and aspirations of people at different income levels. The use of ecological latrines is stimulated as much as possible so that re-use of excreta for 'manure' can be promoted. Public latrines can be an appropriate option in urban settings, depending on the operation and management system, as inappropriate hygienic management can turn a public latrine into a health hazard. In some countries national WASH policies only promote household latrines and not public latrines (also as a reaction to the millennium development goals in which public latrines are not counted as representing access to improved latrines). However, household latrines are more expensive because of their specific environmental health requirements. They can be unaffordable for the majority of the people, and house owners can be unwilling to improve the sanitation situation of the houses they rent out. Simavi takes care to ensure that improving the sanitation at a rented house will not lead to exorbitant rental increases that can result in households not being able to afford the increased rent and becoming homeless.

FIETS sustainability

Sustainability cannot only be reached by taking social sustainability aspects into account. Simavi works according to five sustainability principles: - Financial, Institutional, Ecological, Social and Technical (FIETS) sustainability. The other four must also be considered when developing and implementing WASH programmes.



photo: Jeppe van Pruissen

¹ Source: IIED Briefing paper on Africa's Water Crisis, March 2009

² Source: UNICEF South Asia website

³ Harold Lockwood and Ton Schouten, Thematic Overview Paper on Scaling Up of Community Management of Rural Water Supply, 2004

⁴ Taking Community-Led Total Sanitation to Scale: Movement, Spread and Adaptation, Andrew Deak IDS Working Paper 298, Feb 2008