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Adapting a district-wide approach to WASH: lessons learned from a small NGO

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**EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE WASH SERVICES:
FUTURE CHALLENGES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD**

**Adapting a district-wide approach to WASH:
Lessons learned from a small NGO**

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REFERENCE NO. 3320

Introduction

This research was undertaken by Dig Deep, an NGO based in the UK and Kenya with a focus on providing sustainable rural access to WASH. In 2020 Dig Deep initiated a programme following the district wide approach to WASH systems strengthening developed by Agenda for Change. This approach (Figure 1) includes 5 stages: introduction and visioning, institutional strengthening, assessment, planning, and implementation and monitoring. Whilst this approach is designed to be a general framework, and adaptable to local contexts, our experiences in implementing this approach suggest some lessons that may be of interest to a broader community of practice. These are:

- That an iterative approach to all stages of this framework is not only necessary, but desirable.
- That operating at different administrative levels is an effective way of managing capacity.

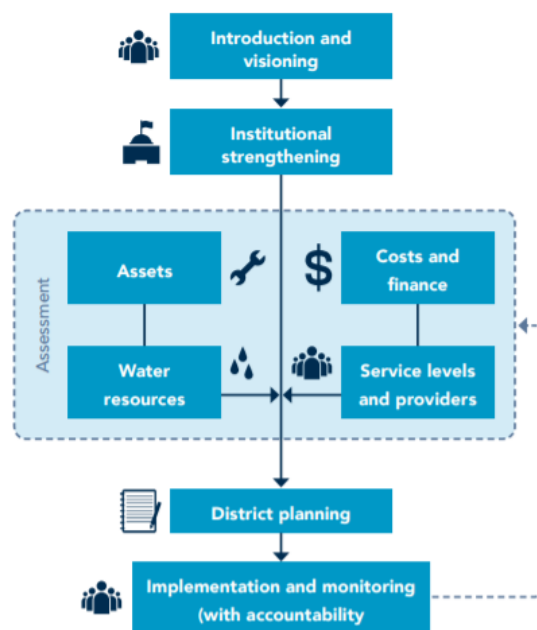


Figure 1 District-wide planning framework by Agenda for Change

Adopting an iterative approach

The main challenge Dig Deep faced in the first year of our programme, excepting complications and delays due to Covid-19, was gaining buy-in from our main local partner, the Bomet County Government (BCG). Whilst Dig Deep has a good working relationship with BCG, there was not immediate buy-in from county officials. Adopting an iterative approach to this framework has greatly increased the engagement of decision makers with the process. Firstly, by combining training activities with smaller scale planning activities, specifically with regards to community led total sanitation. This gave decision makers an opportunity to see the potential for this approach to improve current practice before making a large financial investment. Secondly, by organising benchmarking trips to other counties with officials from BCG, allowing them to experience the benefits of good practice examples firsthand.

Operating at different administrative levels

Due to Dig Deep being a small NGO (annual turnover <£1 million), it has been necessary to conduct some of these stages at a smaller administrative level than that of the county (Figure 2). In particular, detailed planning and implementation are occurring at the ward level (circa 50,000 people), and a baseline household survey has been conducted at the sub-county level (circa 200,000) people. This approach has had benefits, in terms of both effectively managing the levels of involvement from our local partner, and allowing us to improve practice by lessons learned from previous work.

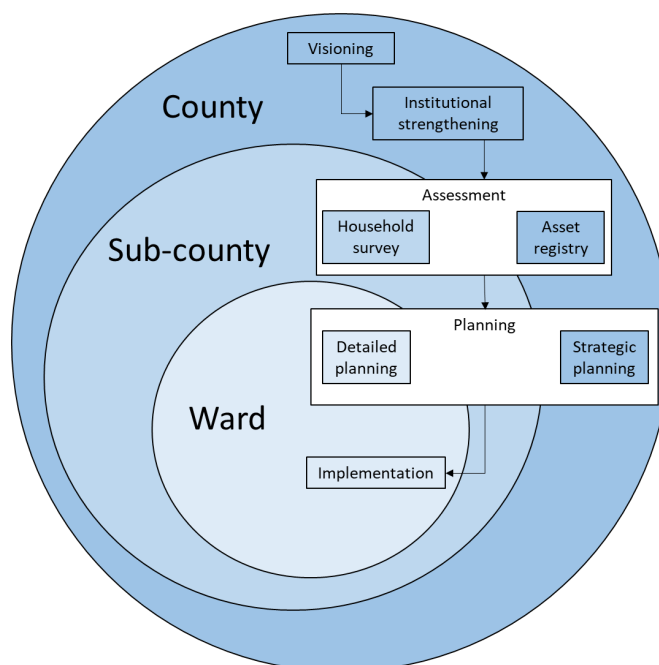


Figure 2 Stages of the approach carried out by Dig Deep at the ward scale, sub-county scale and county scale

Summary

Dig Deep has adapted the district-wide approach shown above, to be integrated in time, and implemented across administrative scales. While still in an early phase of implementation, this approach has enabling an effective ramping up of activities, by ensuring buy-in from our partner, managing the capacity of our organisation, and applying the learning we have gained from initial trials to later work.

References

Agenda for change: a district level roadmap for universal access to sustainable WASH services.
The Hague : IRC, WaterAid, Water for People, Aguaconsult and Osprey Foundation, 2017.

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