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PUBLISHER

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VERSION

VoR (Version of Record)

PUBLISHER STATEMENT

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REPOSITORY RECORD

Pokomol, Oketcho, and George Alito. 2019. “WASH Services in Former Internally Displaced People's Camps (idps) in Northern Uganda”. figshare. https://hdl.handle.net/2134/31243.

38th WEDC International Conference, Loughborough University, UK, 2015

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES BEYOND 2015:
IMPROVING ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

WASH services in former Internally Displaced People's Camps (IDP) in Northern Uganda

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BRIEFING PAPER 2303

The Lord Resistance Army lead a rebellion in Northern Uganda that resulted into displacement of 2.2 million people into Internally Displaced Peoples Camps. The insurgency which span for two decades created a serious humanitarian crisis, people lived in camps without adequate water and sanitation facilities. Hand pump boreholes as source of water was not sufficient and as an emergency response, Government and International Relief Agencies motorized the boreholes and water supplied through piped systems. With peace, people returned to their original homes leaving behind the piped water infrastructures. Government with support from Development Partners initiated Water and Sanitation Development Facility programme as a mechanism for funding water and sanitation investments in all small towns. Through this programme, the emergence systems in the former IDP camps are being resized, rehabilitated and constructed to match the current population and development process, people are sensitised and so far changes are being registered.

Background

Northern Uganda was under insurgency for close to two decades. The Lord Resistance Army (LRA) lead a rebellion which had a history and reputation of extreme violence, leading to great fear and massive displacement of the population into Internally Displaced People's Camps (IDPs). According to the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), LRA attacks and wave of terror displaced nearly 95 percent of the ethnic Acholi and Langi population plus some parts of Teso in Eastern Uganda. The number of people living in IDPs grew from about 500,000 in March 2002 to 800,000 by March 2003, to 1.6 million by March 2004, and to 2.2 million at the peak of the insurgency in 2006. As the scale of the conflict widened the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) looked at establishment of camps as the easiest way to protect the population. Camps were therefore established in administrative headquarters, public facilities like schools where UPDEF could deploy solders to offer protection to the population.

This civil conflict and violence resulted in a humanitarian crisis that had not been seen in the country before and it span for almost 20 years. According to the Ministry of Water and Environment's Sector Performance Report 2008, by March 2006, 2.2 million people in Northern Uganda had been displaced and were living in internally displaced people's camps without adequate water, sanitation facilities and health care.

Genesis of piped water supply schemes in Internally Displaced People's Camps

As the population moved into these Internally Displaced People's Camps, huge settlements were created and point water supplies that used to serve the rural population setting could no longer meet the demands of the people. There were long queues in the few available hand pumps which could be pumped for 24 hours a day but could not still meet the water demand for the population and yet the population could not be allowed to move out of the camps to look for water. As emergency responses to the water shortages that were being faced by the camp dwellers, International Relief Agencies together with Government constructed small

piped water schemes by motorizing the boreholes such that water is pumped into an overhead reservoir and supplied to the people through public stand tape.

The boreholes were powered by either diesel Generators or solar and the Operators/Care-takers were mainly Camp Commanders and volunteers. Water was for free as the Relief Agencies provided the fuel to run the generators and employed technical staff who carried out the necessary servicing and repairs.

Sanitation facilities

The sanitation facilities in the camps were mainly shared pit latrines. A cluster of households shared a latrine block that had bath shelters attached. In some cases bath shelters with over head showers were provided. People living in the camps were given strict instructions on cleanliness of these facilities and personal hygiene practices like washing hands after using a latrine. Strict adherence to the instruction was paramount for survival.

Transition from emergency to development

As peace returned and people started to go back to their original homes, the former IDP camps that had been turned into small towns were left with the infrastructure (piped water supply systems and sanitation facilities).

The NGOs and UN Relief Agencies that were in charge of provision of water and sanitation services during the emergency period pulled out of the region with the WASH Cluster that used to be coordinated by Unicef for years closed by mid 2009 and all the piped water schemes were handed over to the District Local Governments.

Sustainable management of the schemes became an issue as the population in the IDP camps kept on fluctuating.. With time populations in the former IDP camps is more defined and the majority are now small towns.

Government of Uganda initiated Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda as a midterm measure to address the post emergency situation. This initiative brought together various sectors, for Water and Sanitation the objectives were mainly to; i) enhance maintenance of existing water and sanitation facilities ii) promote awareness regarding proper sanitation and hygiene practices and iii) Increase safe water coverage.

In response the Ministry of Water and Environment initiated a Water and Sanitation Development Facility – North (WSDF-N) programme as a mechanism for funding water and sanitation investments in the Small Towns and Rural Growth Centres in Northern region.. This programme addresses provision of water and sanitation services in all the small towns and rural growth centres including former IDP camps..

The situation at the start

Between June and August 2009, WSDF-N carried out a status verification exercise with the aim of gathering baseline information.. The exercise, which covered 76 schemes existing in 66 selected former Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps within Acholi and Lango Sub region, revealed that: 54% were not functional, 36% were functional with various operation and maintenance gaps and only 8% were operational with minimal challenges.

Furthermore the verification revealed that by the time of hand over of the schemes to the District Local Governments; the population in the former IDP had reduced tremendously, Operators and Caretakers had gone back to the original homes and the districts with minimal budgets were ill prepared to provide the fuel to run the generators and employed technical staff to carry out the necessary servicing and repairs... The water schemes had depreciated and with absence of management structures there was miss-use and vandalism of the assets. For example generators were not being serviced and repaired, solar panels were being stolen and there were no people to attend to the stand taps.

To address these issues, Water and Sanitation Development Facility – North adopted strategies for sustainable management of the schemes which include;

- Community participation-through bottom-up planning,
- A "package" approach for rehabilitation/installation of water supply (appropriate designs are developed to address the growing populations of the towns and water supply is restored)
- Promoting of general attitude change so that communities feel that sustainable management of the piped water system is their responsibility rather than something that NGOs, Relief Agencies or Local Governments provides.,

- hygiene education, gender, HIV and AIDs awareness-creation, capacity building at user level for sustainable operation,
- Strengthening and empowering of existing decentralised institutions; (Water Authorities, Sub-Counties and Operators) in decision making and sustainable management

Participate/involvement of the benefiting communities

Community mobilization and sensitization is carried out with a view to inform the people about the need to shift from emergency to development and for effective participation in the process by the beneficiaries. In this connection, for any town to be served, communities have to express interest by applying, enter into a memorandum of understanding with WSDF-N and commit themselves to contribute towards the investment costs like provision of land where major installations are installed. WSDF-N then assists communities to form Committees that are ultimately responsible for successful implementation of activities in their respective towns.

Detailed assessment of technical status of the schemes

Underground water still serves as main source of water, therefore, current boreholes serving as source of supply to a town is investigated in details. Furthermore the integrity of the installation like, reservoir tanks (which are mainly plastic tanks), transmission and distribution lines are checked and, alignment of pipelines with respect to the present targeted population carried out. Service levels have still remained public stand tapes.

An assessment of the socioeconomic aspects of population of the centres is also under taken to focus mainly on, current number of people who have settled in town, availability of institutions like a Health Centre, Schools, administrative headquarters, ongoing economic activities, community willingness and capacity to take on the O&M requirements.

The water schemes are then categorized into three main categories,

a) Schemes that required minor repairs and establishment of operation and management structures.
b) Schemes that required replacement of damaged components and minor repairs plus establishment of operation and maintenance structures.
c) Schemes that required a complete replacement. This is eminent were population has completely out striped the capacity of former water supply.

Re-sizing / conversion works; method agreed on accordingly

For scheme under category A, minor repairs are being done and the systems are continuing to serve the population in the short term. For those that are in category B & C the schemes are redesigned and reconstructed according to the requirements and demands of the current population in the centres. Since the capacity of the schemes are to match with the trend of development the programme ensures that there is sufficient water source, reservoir tanks are relocated to appropriate sites, pipeline are realigned along the roads network and extended to areas were population have settled, service connections are in the form of yard tapes and water kiosks are provided to serve the poorer section of the community. All service connections are applied for, metered and consumers are paying for volumes of water consumed.

Establishment of Operation & Maintenance (O&M) structures

Unlike in emergencies situation were schemes were constructed with less consultation of the communities and water was supplied for free, during this transition period, users are sensitized to value and own the schemes and are encourage to pay for the services as the only way to sustain the schemes. O&M structures such as Water Supply and Sewerage Boards are formed and trained; Operators selected and trained to manage the re-sized / converted schemes. Operator management contracts are signed with the respective Local Authorities and the Operators are paid a percentage from the revenue generated from the tariffs.

Development of capacity of the community to operate and manage the system

Resources are invested in training of communities and the Local Governments on how to socially, technically and financially manage the schemes. All connections are metered, an Operator is appointed and trained and part of the revenue being generated from the tariff is used to pay the Operator. A water office is built and is where all water business is conducted in each Centre. An escrow account for each town is

opened where all the revenue from the water scheme is banked. The account is managed jointly by the Operator and an Accounting Officer at Local Authority.

Sanitation and hygiene

An integrated approach is ensured, sanitation and hygiene activities are under taken alongside water supply. Main activities include; promotion of pit latrine construction at household level, and promotion of ecological toilets (Ecosan) toilet technology, all aimed at increasing sanitation / basic latrine coverage. In selected primary schools, full sanitation package including menstrual hygiene, sold waste management is addressed. Good Hygiene practices especially hand washing after visiting latrine is promoted.

Water is used as an incentive to promote sanitation in that whoever has a latrine benefits from a subsidized yard connection. In Public places like markets, waterborne toilets with bathing facilities are provided and users pay a fee. The management of the public sanitation facilities are packaged together with that of water supply and given to the same operator running the water scheme.

Commissioning of completed facilities

All systems that have been completed are handed over to the Local Authority who carries out the oversight role for its operation and maintenance. The Local Authorities enter into a performance contract with the Minister for Water and Environment and they have full control over the assets and in case of transfer to other parties or disposal; the process can only be done through the Districts following government procedures.

Achievements

Since inception 2008 the programmes has so far completed 20 schemes across the region serving a population of approximately 150,000 people. Sustainable management of these water systems are being enhanced by,

- Increased trade with neighboring countries of South Sudan and East Congo which has enabled the communities to have disposable income to pay for the services.
- Continued decentralization by Government leading to establishment of new districts, town councils and other administrative structures has led to increase in population and activities in these former IDP camps.
- Increasingly populations are moving to small towns to seek for business opportunities in this region.

Lessons learnt

- Aligning the thinking of communities from emergency to development is a slow process.
- Communities in northern Uganda lived in IDP camps for over two decades where most of services were provided by NGOs and UN agencies. With the competing demands, community's understanding of the situation sometimes leads to them prioritizing other needs other than water and sanitation resulting into delay by the community to fulfill obligations. Therefore, implementation of activities is sometimes delayed or temporarily postponed. Furthermore during emergency several boreholes were drilled within these former IDP camps and some are still in use, decommissioning these boreholes takes time.
- Moving from supply driven where NGO and International Relief Agencies were addressing an emergency situation to demand driven approaches requires a lot of effort.
- Former IDP water supply schemes were constructed as emergency responses to water shortages that were being faced by the camp dwellers. Construction was done with less consultation and water was free. There was no time and need to invest in training of communities and the local authorities on how to socially, technically and financially manage the systems. However, the situation has changed and users have to participate. Operation and maintenance structures are established for sustainable management. The cascade approach adopted by WSDF-N in sensitization and training requires that community leaders are fully committed to the process; this requires a lot of time and other resources.
- Designing of the schemes to match the current population in the Centres require substantial amount of resources which was not envisaged.
- Original intervention mainly focused on restoration of supply; however, as population and business opportunities expanded in these towns, the need for a robust system became eminent. The town water systems therefore require full design before construction can be undertaken. Production wells have to be drilled way outside the towns. Expenses on Socio-economic studies, feasibility and detailed engineering design and water resources investigations are being incurred. This has resulted into increased costs and reduced number of towns covered with the available budgets.

- Land crisis in these Centres. As people resettle, land owner are demanding for relocation of water system installation or huge compensations which communities cannot afford in the short run. Assurance and full support from the local governments to resolve the issues is a positive step towards sustainability of the water supply systems.
- Adaptation of appropriate sanitation technologies, provision of the facilities requires patience and time. Adaption to good hygiene practices is slow.
- WSDF-N is motivating people to change their personal behavior within the timescale of implementation; however it is being realized that fundamental behavior change may take generations presumably because it is only children who will change their behavior. This has led the programme to target primary school children.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend thanks to all the Leaders and technical staff of the 23 District Local Governments, staff of Water and Sanitation Development Facility- North and other stakeholders particularly KfW.

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