

Supporting Poor-inclusive Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform

Integrating Behavior Change and Hygiene in Public Policy: Four Key Dimensions

Lessons from the Conference “Beyond Infrastructure:
Integrating Hygiene in Water and Sanitation Policy in Latin
America and the Caribbean”

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Author

Rocio Florez, Hygiene Specialist, World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program.

Editor

Penelope Dutton, Consultant.

Peer Review from Technical Experts

Elsie Laudent. SDSH Project, Center for Communication Programs, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

Mark Henderson. Chief WASH, The United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF

Glenn Pearce Oroz. Water and Sanitation Specialist. World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program.

Antonio Rodriguez. Water and Sanitation Specialist. World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program.

Rodrigo Cisneros. Senior Institutional Development Specialist. World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program.

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Shinny Montes

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1818 H Street NW

Washington, DC 20433

Telephone: 202-473-1000

Internet: www.worldbank.org

www.wsp.org

wspiac@worldbank.org

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Foreword

During the past decade countries in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region have lifted more than 50 million people out of poverty,¹ yet half of the rural population in the region still lacks access to sanitation and approximately 20% to drinking water.

In January 2012, policy makers, scholars and practitioners from nine Latin-American and Caribbean countries came together in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic² to explore the opportunities and challenges of integrating in a more systematic and sustainable way the promotion of hygiene and sanitation behavioral change into water and sanitation investments. The topic becomes especially relevant at a time when countries in the Region are facing increasing challenges aimed to reduce their internal economic and social inequalities.³ Furthermore, climate change increases the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather events, placing an even higher premium on building resilience to an uncertain future, including through sustainable access to water and sanitation.⁴

During the conference in Santo Domingo, it became evident that a common understanding is currently emerging from most countries in the sense that infrastructure by itself will not solve the global problems of inadequate access to improved sanitation and potable water, unless people adopt new behaviors. Therefore, there is a need to spread learning on best practices to implement cost effective water, sanitation and hygiene models, which bring about change at home and in the community at scale. In this regard, sound public policy and local capacities are among the gaps that need to be filled before countries are able to sustainably reach most of the currently excluded population.

This paper highlights key issues that arose in presentations and group discussions during the conference, which, could lead to substantial improvements in the provision of a multi-sector approach to hindering sustainable water and sanitation services for all.

Introduction

As the MDG deadline approaches, global level access to water and sanitation still faces challenges. Even if targets are met by 2015, 1.6 billion people will still lack improved sanitation at home and 800 million people will yet have to collect water from distant and/or unprotected sources.⁵

Nevertheless, important progress is taking place to explore and implement creative solutions to widen access to water and sanitation services, whilst engaging communities and their authorities in the process of sustainable change. In this regard, a growing awareness among authorities, professionals and decision makers is leading to an expanded vision for increasing access, which goes beyond a sole hardware solution adding behavior change as a complementary and necessary ingredient for sustainable results.

Yet a fundamental challenge needs to be addressed: how to integrate a continual process of behavior change vis-a-vis the limited time frame of water and sanitation infrastructure programs, which start and end with the building process? Participants at the conference concurred that there is relevant learning emerging from public and/or private sector endeavors in several countries in the region that highlights the strength of a broader approach in the sector.

Participants at the Conference in Santo Domingo identified the following **four key dimensions** believed to be priority areas of work for policy makers and practitioners in the LAC region to focus on and obtain desired results. The dimensions are explained below.

KEY DIMENSION I

Behavior change: triggering and sustaining

Behavior is complex and influenced by sets of determinants such as motivators, values, beliefs and past experiences of individuals within their social systems. Any communication intervention geared towards changing behaviors should be aligned with the overall cultural context where it will be set in, whilst specific variables that would influence the

1 World Bank Press Release No:2011/429/LAC.

2 “Beyond Infrastructure: Integrating Hygiene in Water and Sanitation Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean” – Santo Domingo, January 18th and 19th, 2012. The conference was organized by the *Instituto Nacional de Aguas Potables y Alcantarillados* and WSP.

3 The top 10% of the population holds 42 % of the share of income in LAC. World Bank Press Release No:2011/429/LAC.

4 Water Aid Policy Report: Off track, off target. November, 2011.

5 Bartram, Jamie; Cairncross, Sandy. Hygiene, Sanitation, and Water: Forgotten Foundations of Health.

individual choices to decide either to adopt a habit or not, ought to be considered too. We know that the social norm influences our choices and hence behaviors. This is one of the reasons why information alone does not bring about behavior change⁶ unless activities at community level are also included.

As an ongoing process, it is understood that behavior change needs to be continuously strengthened through different communication channels. Furthermore determining factors mentioned above, need to be fully identified up front and then be addressed by trustworthy communicators, within relevant cultural contexts. Said process goes beyond mass media campaigns, entailing a complex network of articulated interactions and methodologies that help targeting and engaging audiences.

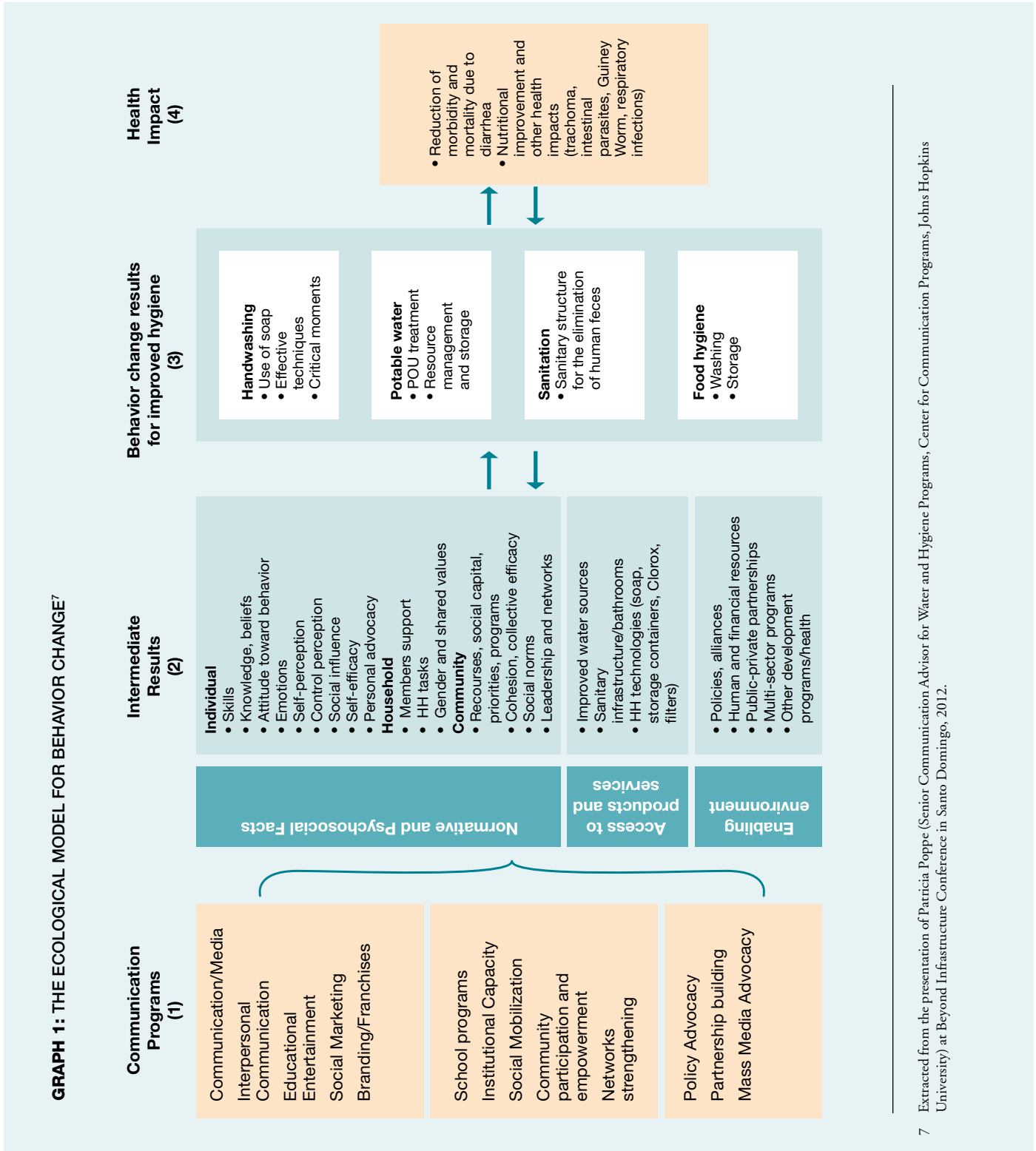
There are several approaches that have been used to change prevailing practices or bring about change in behaviors of a family, such is the case of UN-HABITAT that developed a simple and easily understandable set of messages that are organized and communicated in a manner relevant to improvement of water and sanitation facilities throughout the project cycle. UNICEF's WASH program in schools (in LAC ESCASAL in Honduras or IEAS in Nicaragua) uses an effective approach that targets messages to specific audiences based on their motives towards adopting new behaviors.



Banner of the event "Beyond Infrastructure: Integrating Hygiene in Water and Sanitation Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean" – Santo Domingo, January 18th and 19th, 2012.

⁶ Francesca Monetti's presentation at UNAID's Symposium: Social norms and collective behavior. May 2010.

GRAPH 1: THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE⁷



⁷ Extracted from the presentation of Patricia Poppe (Senior Communication Advisor for Water and Hygiene Programs, Center for Communication Programs, Johns Hopkins University) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

Starting 2007, WSP launched a FOAM (Focus, Opportunity, Ability and Motivation)⁸ framework to guide the route from research to communication for the Handwashing Initiative (HWI) “Scaling-up Handwashing Behavior Change” that was carrying out projects in Peru, Senegal, Tanzania and Vietnam. The FOAM framework sought for answers regarding:

- Who the target audience and what the desired behavioral change were.
- The available individual resources for a behavioral change.
- The individual capacities to perform a certain desired behavior.
- The individual will to perform a certain behavior.

Such a conceptual framework as FOAM allows researchers and practitioners to theorize about factors that determine a particular behavior, whereas through further research and progress monitoring, the original intervention focus can be corrected during implementation.

From research to communication

Communication grounded on behavior/formative research is essential for targeting the audience on the basis of determinants that trigger behavioral change. In this regard, the “black box”, what actually happens after a message is communicated that may or may not result in the final adoption of a certain desired behavior, needs to be further explored.

Important academia and private sector findings on behavioral motivation shed light on the complexities of human nature. For instance, health is not on the top list of individual motivations –however, women would certainly wash their hands with soap before cooking, keep clean and pretty bathrooms, and raise their children well groomed, if by acting like that they perceive that their value within the community is enhanced. Furthermore, a hygiene behavior such as handwashing with soap is normally learned early in life and become highly habitual, if influenced by local cultural norms i.e. by what everyone else is doing.⁹ The

latter refers to a “collective identity” which is particularly strong in Latin America.

Other motivating factors for changing behavior have to do with economics. Saving money is an important trigger for behavioral change, same as access to financial opportunities to make home improvements, given that both can lead towards enhancing social status.¹⁰

Naturally, triggers vary within different cultural contexts. For example, due to the hierarchical social order and submissive behavior expected from children in Vietnam, they would never become “agents of change” for their elders but could still influence their peers. In contrast, children in Peru do bring new ideas home, and discuss them with their elders, their mothers in particular.¹¹

In the case of Uganda, many survey respondents said that smell of soap on their hands was off-putting as they ate with their hands, and therefore, preferred not to use strong smelling soap before eating. To the contrary, findings from Kenya showed that individuals in communities with a rich fish diet preferred using perfumed soaps, after they eat, though.¹²

As described, channels chosen to communicate messages are highly relevant but not unique, although message carriers ought to be always trustworthy. In the case of Senegal, the HWI had initially not considered men as agents of change, choice that had to be modified later, after learning that men roles in their families defined them as providers, protectors, and behavior models.

Clusters of behaviors

Behaviors are linked in clusters, either one leading to others or several interrelated reinforcing one another. For instance, families investing in sanitation are motivated to keep their facilities clean; consequently they may adopt personal hygiene behaviors such as handwashing with soap.

A recent pilot evaluation in Peru showed that 69% of households had soap in their bathrooms and 76% of those

8 Peru: A Handwashing Behavior Change Journey. Jacqueline Devine & Rocío Florez. WSP (2010).

9 Curtis V, Cairncross S. Effect of washing hands with soap on diarrhoea risk in the community: a systematic review. *Lancet Infectious Diseases*. 2003; 3:275-81.

10 Findings – Creating Sanitation Markets - Peru.

11 The Power of primary schools to change and sustain handwashing with soap among children. Cases of Peru and Vietnam. Penelope Dutton ET all. WSP. (2011).

12 Steadman Group (Uganda) 2007.

Improving Access to Quality Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - Lessons from Research

I. Results and lessons from two at-scale WASH projects that sought to increase access to sanitation and improve hygiene practices in Ethiopia and Madagascar.

Ethiopia	Madagascar
Implementation at scale: multi sector/multi action; focused on key hygiene behaviors; seeks integration to ongoing programs; invests in local capacities. Baseline: 2000 households (HH); Endline: 1378 households (HH)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community led Hygiene and Sanitation Behavior change • Integrated model to national and regional hygiene and sanitation strategy • Implemented by sanitary promoters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple communication channels • Implemented by sanitary and health promoters
<p>Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community led Total Sanitation • Household Visits strengthening • Negotiation to improve practices • WASH friendly schools • Investment to develop multiple sector teams 	<p>Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation to improve practices • SODIS clean water method • Sanitary options promotion • Mass media
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Defecation decreased from 64% to 43% • Access to sanitation 18% to 45% 	<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Defecation decreased from 39% to 23% • Access to sanitation from 59% to 73%
<p>Lessons and challenges of an implementation at scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders' endorsement sets grounds for enabling environment. • Working with three ministries: health, education and water to widen scope and coverage. • Flexibility, innovation and experimentation – critical implementation principles to enhance learning. • Results attribution is challenging in a multi sector implementation project. • There is still no evidence that working through established institutions will bring sustainability. 	

Merri Weinger. Senior Environmental Health Advisor, US Agency for the International Development, USAID.

II. Clean water for human consumption: evaluation of sustainable solutions in Honduras and El Salvador.

Problem:

Unfortunately, improved water, piped water specifically, regularly supplies contaminated water, often intermittently, to households throughout the developing world. The Root causes of this problem include:

1. Quality of source water is compromised and is not always treated prior to distribution.
2. Disinfection is often not monitored/enforced before it is delivered.
3. Aging water systems develop leaks through corrosion.
4. Intermittent services combined with leaky pipes causes suction in the pipes and contamination of the entire system or unsafe storage.
5. Some operators lack the technical capacity in operations and maintenance to address the needs of a particular water system.
6. Some village water committees lack the accounting and budgeting knowledge to raise funds and save for future fixes.

Research Questions & Methods:

1. What is the health and sustainability impact of household water filters over two years in households with contaminated, intermittent piped water in Honduras? (272 household surveys; water quality tests in each households at baseline, after one year, and two years with the filter).
2. What is the effect of the post-construction support model, the circuit rider model, on the quality and sustainability of piped water systems in El Salvador? (120 structural observations of drinking water systems, 120 interviews with operators of water systems and presidents of water committees, 252 water quality tests and 126 residual chlorine tests in 60 piped water systems).

CONTINUE...

Results:	
Household Water Filters	Circuit Rider Model
<p>In households with the household water filter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality was maintained over 2 years • Use of the filter decreased over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 61% still in use after 1 year o 47% still in use after 2 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main reason mentioned for disuse was broken parts. Availability of spare parts was the main reason mentioned for not replacing broken parts. 	<p>In communities with Circuit Rider post-construction support when compared with control communities, there was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less microbiologically contaminated water (E coli, Total coliform)* and improved drinking water treatment (residual chlorine)* • Improved system sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Better financial,* operational,* and technical outcomes* o Enhanced community acceptance* • Low cost/household served (\$1/household/year) • The CRM could be adapted and replicated <p style="text-align: right;">*Statistically Significant Results</p>
<p>Lessons for Implementation at Scale: This research suggests that it is not the technology alone that leads to the provision of a reliable, safe, sufficient, and sustainable drinking water service, it is the combination of effective technology, appropriate at the village and household level, availability of spare replacement parts, ongoing technical support, and behavior change promotion.</p>	
<p><i>Dr. Georgia Kayser. The Water Institute, The University of North Carolina.</i></p>	

bathrooms were clean.¹³ Furthermore, women who placed a handwashing station in the appropriate places at home: extended hygiene to other daily life domains; their houses looked cleaner; and their children were better groomed as reported by their nurseries.¹⁴

KEY DIMENSION II
A systemic approach: multi-sectoral and integrated

There is a growing need to bring diverse sectors to the water and sanitation table, especially as they are important actors to enhance and sustain complex changes of behavior over time. In order to enable an integrated fieldwork the prior coordination and commitment of different actors at different levels needs to be established, thereby gathering at least: health, water and sanitation, environment, and education sectors at national as well as at sub national levels, together with the private sector, the civil society and communities at large.

The power of sub national governments

At local level, municipalities have a powerful leading role. Due to their proximity to the audience they are able to establish strong two-way communication channels that improve efficiency and results.

In Oaxaca, Mexico, the cholera outbreak of 1991 generated an organized response from authorities to face the crisis and led to long-term preventive solutions.¹⁵

The municipality launched a strategy to reach excluded rural communities and committed to building the Culture of Water. The program built capacities of field agents and promoted the participation of children to bring about change among families: new methods to disinfect drinking water and new hygiene behaviors were promoted. A resulting 40% reduction of child diarrhea, gave rise to the program becoming a programmed line of work of the municipality. This is a success story shared by several countries in the region.

13 Creating Sanitation Markets. Final Narrative and financial Report. WSP Peru. (2010).

14 Wawa Wasi Program evaluation of the Handwashing Initiative. WSP Peru (2011).

15 Extracted from the presentation of Julian Ríos (Director, State Water Commission of Oaxaca, Mexico) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

The challenge at sub national level is how to incorporate field learning within structural programming to achieve long-lasting results. While field evidence has the potential to generate a common understanding among different sectors on the approach to water, sanitation and hygiene, the corresponding roles for each sector need to be well defined at higher levels. What happens after the project ends is still in the discussion agenda.

The multi-sector route

Authorities are becoming aware that in order to tackle challenges efficiently, an articulated effort among varied sectors is required. Promoting hygiene behaviors is not solely a concern of the health sector, but also of education, water and sanitation, environment and nutrition sectors. Once a common goal is defined then the opportunity to bring different sectors to the table arises in order to define common objectives, roles and responsibilities within an agreed timeframe.

The Regional Government in Cajamarca, Peru, was able to unite all necessary sectors of government, the private mining companies, and NGOs and in one organized committee aimed to align resources to impact on children malnutrition

rates. After 2 years of articulated effort, 13% drop in malnutrition could be observed from the original 60% of prevalence in some districts of the region.¹⁶

A systemic approach to hygiene promotion at scale in Ethiopia provides lessons for replication in other regions. There, a national in-house program included personal hygiene, water treatment and improved access to sanitation including solid waste. Multiple sectors, capacity building and investment on health provision improvement resulted in a 24% reduction of defecation in the open. “From household to the globe” – the process of behavior change that starts in the private sphere of home and sprouts into the community – is a grass roots, holistic approach that improves sustainability, links behaviors that strengthen each other, and has potential to expand horizons beyond the family into the community.¹⁷

A similar case in Nicaragua, the water and sanitation program “Healthy families, schools and communities” (FECSA), seeks to promote multiple behaviors at home but engages authorities, promoters and community leaders to endorse and sustain the process of change.¹⁸

Box 1. Leading change at local level: the role of municipalities

- a. The provincial municipality of Anta (Cusco, Peru) led a four year process that focused on environmental management to address a critical situation by which the population did not have access to clean water, adequate sanitation, and lacked sanitary culture. A technical team was set to design a holistic strategy and a plan was implemented on a phase by phase basis. The Mayor called all sectors on board and invited the international cooperation institutions to align its support to match the province’s priorities. For the program to be successful the population had to envision a and environmental program was integrated into the primary curricula in all 42 primary schools, with topics such as hand washing, clean water, solid waste management, recycling, forestation and composting. Furthermore, there was a 48% and 74% increase in access to water and sanitation respectively. The city was arranged in 12 ecological neighborhoods as the population learned to pay for the municipal garbage collection service. Anta’s population accessed micro credit to finance home improvement, in-door bathrooms in particular.
- b. In Oaxaca, Mexico, a national program to promote Culture of Water, raise awareness on the scarcity of the resource and trigger its good use and preservation.¹⁹ A community based program, led by 80 municipalities that started in 2001, included promotion of water purification methods and handwashing with soap; as well as sanitation improvement to reduce open defecation, and local capacity building efforts to assure effectiveness. Over 66 water treatment plants were built resulting in a 98% of the water distributed being purified. This comprehensive program reduced children diarrhea by 40%. Furthermore, the Water Culture became preventive policy in Mexico.²⁰

16 “Crecer en Cajamarca”, Technical Secretariat of the Government of Cajamarca. Dr. R. Portal. 2012.

17 Extracted from the presentation of Yolande Coombes (Senior Specialist in Hygiene and Sanitation, WSP - The World Bank) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

18 Extracted from the presentation of Jose Toruno (Chief, Aguasan Program Nicaragua, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC.) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

19 Extracted from the presentation of Jose Carlos Cornejo (Basic Sanitation Specialist) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

20 Extracted from the presentation of Julián Ríos (Director, State Water Commission of Oaxaca, Mexico) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

The process of bringing varied sectors on board calls for political will and endorsement. Indicators must be aligned and managerial capacities strengthened.



Banner of the event.

KEY DIMENSION III

The private sector becomes a strong ally

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have evolved from the infrastructure realm into the social sphere. Private institutions are investing in health, education and environment - areas previously the exclusive domain of the public sector.

The role of the private sector as a source of creative solutions and fresh resources is increasing and represents both a sound opportunity but also a challenge to be met: the public sector must adapt and reinvent itself to seek new partners and improve the sustainability of water, sanitation and hygiene investments.²¹

Private firms in most Latin American countries can become opinion shapers and guide a growing trend of Corporate Social Responsibility to allocate resources to improve education, health, and environmental protection in alignment with national priorities set by the Government. In addition, there are tax incentives that promote private investments; the amounts invested replace their tributary obligations to a certain extent.

Agricultural firms must comply with high international quality standards (GLOBAL GAP) if their produce enters international markets. In 2009, a new quality standard (ISO 26000) gave an additional certification to companies trading in international markets if they complied with social responsibility guidelines. Mining companies are requested to invest a certain percentage of their revenues in infrastructure and social programs in many countries.

An extra dimension to private involvement in social issues is worth noting. Local firms that work in rural areas, given their proximity to local authorities and the community they work with, are much more attuned to the real needs of the people and are able to target their resources better than national level companies. Improving the quality of life of their worker's families is an issue they face close up and must address to create

21 Extracted from the presentation of Raul Gauto (Regional Representative, AVINA.) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

an enabling environment that will directly benefit their business operation. Furthermore, mining and agricultural private companies have vision as long as the life cycle of their investments – outrunning the terms of most politicians. Their role in the community is therefore long term.

One year after the HWI project ended, WSP found that several of the companies that had invested in previous years, continued to assign resources to the program. A short survey was launched to learn about the reasons and motivations beyond these decisions, and the internal factors that justified an extension, even a scale up of the HWI to new areas. A challenge remaining for public entities is to be able to congregate and coordinate private efforts towards a common end, thereby minimizing dispersion but enabling a larger expected impact.

KEY DIMENSION IV

Public policy and the enabling environment for sustainable change



Working groups

Most Latin American countries are undergoing decentralization, albeit at different paces. There is a growing need to support authorities at national *and* local level to design sound policy that will translate into operational level budget allocation to reach audiences and bring about change, with well defined roles, responsibilities and operational



Attendees of the event

guidelines show results. This is recognized as the single most important challenge to be faced, as many times policies are political declarations that respond to opportunistic rather than programmatic needs.

Hygiene methodologies have been integrated into nutrition, education and/or water and sanitation and environmental policy in Mexico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru among others. In most cases, these were previously validated in the field; their results and impact were evaluated before they were fully integrated. The role of international cooperation to support this learning process is recognized and appreciated, and it is recommended to widen the scope of this support to include sub national and local governments, as it is at these levels that policy achieves its purpose.

Reflections and challenges ahead

The profile of hygiene has risen in recent years from a component in the list of preventive public health interventions, to a stand out element in multidisciplinary interventions that enhances change and enables sustainability.²² Behavioral change methodologies for hygiene promotion applied in nutrition, education, environment and water and sanitation interventions takes us beyond the household, in urban and rural settings, and into the area of the public domain. We learned that one change

²² Taken from group discussions and concluding synthesis by Eduardo Perez (Sanitation Senior Specialist, WSP - The World Bank) at Beyond Infrastructure Conference in Santo Domingo, 2012.

leads to another if the environment is enabling and we need to expand the horizon to include *a set of behaviors* that need to be prioritized.

The Conference at Santo Domingo united experts from nine countries of Latin America, who shared research, experience and thoughts about a main concern: how to improve access to water and sanitation and increase hygiene behaviors among the poorest and excluded population. Emerging learning from all participating countries provides insight and evidence that could shape policy in the region to result in sustainable reach and impact. A common agreement on priority areas for further exploration and implementation has been outlined.

Important reflections will continue to come out of the ongoing dialogue and shape water, sanitation and hygiene reform in Latin America. Some of them are briefly presented below.

The starting point

It is important to remind ourselves that every year 1.8 million die due to the consequences of continuous and severe diarrhea episodes. The main cause of these deaths is attributed to the lack of access to water and sanitation, and absence of appropriate hygiene practices.²³ Evidence shows that improved water and sanitation enables safe hygiene practices such as handwashing and may trigger community spillovers in terms of environmental health benefits from sanitation.²⁴ Handwashing with soap is the most cost effective hygiene practice: one year of life, free of disease and disability is gained for \$3.00 invested in handwashing with soap promotion, as opposed to \$2,750 invested in cholera immunizations.²⁵

Multi sector implementation requires strong local capacities

Field evidence is abundant in regards to the benefits brought by linking water and sanitation to hygiene – most of the cases nevertheless refer to pilots or projects implemented at district level. How these isolated experiences are scaled up remains as a primary challenge. On the other hand,

behavior change is sustained if integrated into multi-sector programs and channeled through community networks and the education system.

Recent evidence in Peru from an implementation at scale shows that handwashing with soap behaviors are adopted by women in households where the children participate in a HW program at school and she participates in promotional activities in her community, as opposed to receiving mass media messages alone.²⁶ Catalyzing and coordinating these multi-sector and community programs calls for strong managerial capacities; sub national and local government teams must be able to lead these processes to reach results. This is an area that international cooperation should focus on: improving local capacities to efficiently promote, administer and monitor the multi-sector approach to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Sound policy from top to bottom

Taken together, water, sanitation and hygiene are a concern of multiple sectors and government levels. As such, the multi-sector approach to water, sanitation and hygiene must be included in public policy to enter the public domain and become permanent.

A main challenge for policy makers is to come together and identify the role each sector should adopt as well as their responsibilities along the process. This implies selecting the appropriate indicators and budget lines to be allocated for action planning, implementation and monitoring. Sound policy design is the result of a timely effort that needs to be endorsed by strong political will at the highest level of government and supported by professional specialized technical advice.

Private sector provides added value

This sector stands out as an endless resource to bring progress to low income families. Private investors are looking at the “base of the pyramid” for opportunities of economic growth. This implies that new products and services are generated to target the needs and priorities of low income segments of the population.

(Continue on page 14...)

23 Water, sanitation and hygiene. UNICEF.

24 Root (2001); Buitenheim (2008).

25 Second edition of Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries, World Bank (2006).

26 Promoting Handwashing Behavior: The Effect of Mass Media and Community Interventions in Peru. Bertha Briceño et al. WSP (2012)

Box 2. Hygiene promotion in a post disaster context – Haiti, after January 12, 2010



Over the past decades, Haiti has remained vulnerable to severe economic and social crises as well as to adverse natural events. The earthquake that struck the island in January of 2010 killed 200,000 people and left 1m homeless. The situation worsened when, in October of the same year, a severe outbreak of cholera was confirmed, causing 2,500 additional deaths and putting about 200,000 people at risk of infection.

Living conditions in Haiti, particularly in the camps and in slum communities, make the country extremely vulnerable to the spread of cholera. These communities have almost no water and sanitation infrastructure, limited health knowledge and often no access to health care. The already fragile public health system, which is expected to provide preventive care, health promotion, curative, rehabilitative and referral services, was further weakened by the earthquake making it more challenging to treat patients with health workers who lack experience in managing cholera cases.

The Government prepared a National Strategy for the Response to the Cholera Epidemic, including the health and water and sanitation response and a Cholera Inter-Sector Response Strategy was developed by partners as a flash appeal supporting activities that limit the cholera epidemic through short-term water supply improvements, an increase in hygiene promotion and health education campaigns, reinforcement of sanitation and waste management, and effective coordination with local authorities. Hygiene promotion, all though critical in this context, was challenging.

According to John Hopkins Resident Advisor, Elsie Laudent, a major challenge had to be faced: how to prioritize and coordinate actions of a complex and multiple post earthquake response.

A partnership of Governmental and non-Governmental institutions was established to develop the Cholera Inter-Sector Response Strategy for Haiti, to reduce mortality and morbidity by limiting the impact of the current cholera outbreak through various projects to be implemented by 42 NGOs, five UN agencies, and the International Organization for Migration. Under this strategy, these partners are implementing activities clustered around three main themes: (i) promoting hygiene and health awareness and distribution of water purification tablets and hand-washing products; (ii) setting up treatment centers for cholera patients; and (iii) ensuring access to safe water and sanitation in camps and vulnerable areas.

According to Ms. Laudent the President's leadership improved coordination among sectors and motivated a strong commitment of different actors in the community. Nevertheless, the response to emergencies needs to be integrated into the country's risk management programming for sustainability purposes.

(... continued from page 12)

Using cellular technologies to monitor health interventions in distant locations is one such invention that is bringing efficiency to the sector. Micro credit schemes are erupting in rural areas where families are investing in home improvements including in-house water and sanitation facilities. But private firms are also closing gaps at local level. Agricultural and mining companies assign funding to improve the lives of their surrounding communities.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a growing trend in Latin America that channels millions of dollars every year to improve education, nutrition, and health, as well as strengthening the sustainable productive capacities of the rural poor and excluded families; precisely the top priority shared by all middle income countries. Learning from these already validated experiences is a field of study in itself.

The power of the municipalities rests on their proximity to the population

On the one hand municipalities directly face their priorities and must deliver effective solutions to gain constituent approval; on the other hand, they have the opportunity to validate creative models and experience results. It is at local level that the multi sector approach comes to the fore and shows results. It is at local level that national policy is validated – if it does not reach community level and translate into improvements to quality of life of the poor population, social policy has no relevance. Close attention is worth paying to what happens at the local level, it is the learning ground where policies can be revised, and also a source of emerging learning to replicate and scale to other areas, provided results are measured rigorously.

