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Case Study: Disability inclusive WASH in Sub Saharan Africa

Tags: Inclusion, Disability, Infrastructure, WASH, Case Study



Credit: Two women stand outside accessible public toilets. Tim Forster.

One billion people, or 15% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher in developing countries.

Well planned infrastructure and inclusive urban services are fundamental to unlocking the potential of people with disabilities. Currently, DI is not consistently addressed across DFID’s infrastructure programming and policy dialogue. It is not always clear to DFID staff or partners what DI means in relation to infrastructure and growth¹, and the actions they might take to achieve it. This is coupled with a perception that addressing disability in infrastructure programming is prohibitively expensive and often unaffordable within project or programme budgets.

DFID’s Disability Definition

“those who have long-term mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers (attitudinal and environmental) may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

This case study highlights the opportunity for DFID WASH programmes and provides basic, introductory guidance on DI to DFID advisers and managers on how to build disability inclusion into programming activities.

The Programme

The Undoing Inequity project was a recent collaboration between WaterAid, the Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) and Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD), with funding from Sanitation and Hygiene Applies Research for Equity (SHARE). Working in Amuria and Katakwi districts in Uganda, and the Mwanza West ward in Zambia, the Undoing Inequity project aimed to understand the barriers PwDs face in relation to WASH, develop and test an inclusive WASH approach and understand the impact of this approach on the lives of the target population in Uganda and Zambia.

¹ Results of ICED survey; report

The approach

Baseline surveys² were carried out to identify the needs of PwDs. However, even this initial step revealed fundamental flaws in terms of data collection and understanding the problem. The views of vulnerable household members with disabilities were not being properly represented by the head of the household responding to the survey.³ Collecting data directly from PwDswas found to be vital and the approach was changed to ensure this, and to include focus group discussions. The survey data was disaggregated to include information on type of impairment and severity of mobility challenge using the Washington Group questions.

It was found that PwDs, older people and people with a chronic illness often lack WASH services because of:⁴

- Environmental constraints: Facilities are not inclusive. This includes long distance to toilets; lack of privacy for toilets of bathing areas; and unsafe and inaccessible toilets.
- Attitudinal barriers: Negative attitudes lead to exclusion: for example PwDs are discouraged from touching or fetching water; are often teased and bullied about WASH related problems; have limited social support; and often face isolation in the family and community
- Institutional barriers: Lack of law, policies, strategies and guidelines on implementing inclusive WASH; lack of consultation or involvement in decision making on WASH policy or facilities; and a lack of information on inclusive technologies.

The programme focused on the critical needs around access to toilet facilities, bathing, water collection and transporting water. In response to the detailed analysis of the needs and constraints to accessing WASH infrastructure, innovative and low-cost interventions were designed. The programme resulted in a very useful *Compendium of Accessible WASH Technologies* for use in low-income countries and FCAS,⁵ which provides suggested solutions that enable inclusive access to WASH facilities.

Key success factors

Critically, in addition to understanding the physical requirements of PwDs and developing appropriate design solutions, the programme also addressed community **awareness raising and behaviour change**. Attitudinal problems are a huge constraint to PwDs being able to access WASH facilities, as well as many other types of infrastructure. An important element is capacity building for local WASH committees who can advocate the needs of PwDsto government and community leaders. The programme also raised awareness amongst entrepreneurs of the opportunities to help provide inclusive WASH solutions.

For further information, case studies and technical guidance on how to ‘build in’ disability inclusion into infrastructure and cities programming please contact the ICED team or visit the ICED website www.icedfacility.org

ICED Facility | iced_programming@uk.pwc.com | @icedfacility | <https://medium.com/iced-facility>

Selected activities undertaken at key stages of the programme lifecycle

Phase 1: Policy and Direction Setting

Baseline surveys conducted to identify needs, disaggregated by type and severity of impairment.

Phase 2: Planning and Design

Views of PwDs collected to shape designs.

Phase 3: Implementation and Performance Management

Awareness raising undertaken to maximise the long-term impact of the project.

Phase 4: Review and Evaluation

Compendium of Accessible WASH Technologies developed to support future projects.

² Information about the level of severity of the impairment was collected as per the baseline using the Washington Group Short set of six core questions <https://blogs.lshtm.ac.uk/disabilitycentre/files/2015/08/Undoing-inequity-inclusive-water-sanitation-hygiene-Uganda.pdf>

³ Available at: <http://www.watercentre.org/services/events/wash2014/conference-program/wash-posters/gosling-undoing-inequity-inclusive-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-programmes-for-all>

⁴ Source: <https://wedc-knowledge.lboro.ac.uk/resources/conference/36/Wilbur-1803.pdf>

⁵ Available at: https://wedc-knowledge.lboro.ac.uk/resources/learning/EI_Compndium_of_accessible_WASH_Technologies.pdf

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Disability Inclusion considerations across infrastructure programme lifecycles

	Inception/Early Concept	Feasibility/Scoping	Strategy/Planning	Design and Procurement	Construction	Testing and Commissioning	Completion, handover and Operation	In use and Service Delivery
Key considerations for programme design	Policy; Finance	Policy; Regulatory; Cultural and Behavioural	Finance; Information and Data; Cultural and Behavioural	Physical and built environment; Information and Data	Information and Data	Information and Data; Physical and built environment	Regulatory; Cultural and Behavioural; Information and Data	Information and Data; Physical and built environment
Inclusive WASH infrastructure. The Undoing Inequity project in Uganda and Zambia	Research and inclusion analysis identified that there is very little access to WASH facilities available for PwDs.	Programme scoping underlined the significant proportion of PwDs excluded from dignified WASH access and highlighted the expected potential benefits of DI.	Baseline survey undertaken to provide a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by PwDs ⁶ . It was vital to directly consult those with disabilities, as it was found their needs and views were inaccurately represented by other household members. Other relevant stakeholders were also identified including community advocacy groups.	A range of practical and low-cost solutions were developed to allow PwDs across a wide range of impairments access to toilet facilities, bathing, collecting water and transporting water.	Feedback on initial construction and any outstanding problems, by community stakeholders (e.g. PwDs and representative groups).	Innovative solutions were tested by PwDs and improvements were made based on feedback from PwDs and from advocacy/representative groups. A compendium of tested and practical design solutions was developed for knowledge sharing.	Completion of physical projects was accompanied by a range of capacity building and awareness raising activities for all community members (with a focus on community leaders) to change negative attitudes towards PwDs.	Compendium of design solutions provided guidance and recommendations on required maintenance

⁶ Information about the level of severity of the impairment was collected as per the baseline using the Washington Group Short set of six core questions.