



Oxford Policy Management

Final Evaluation of the Fair Water Futures Project (*Uhakika wa Maji*) in Tanzania

Executive summary

Lucrezia Tincani and Willie Mwaruvanda

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Introduction

The overall purpose of this independent evaluation was to provide a comprehensive understanding of what was achieved by the Fair Water Futures project, known locally as *Uhakika wa Maji* (hereafter Uhakika). In particular, the evaluation aimed to understand the factors which contributed to the successes and challenges faced by the project, as well as to draw out lessons for similar social accountability monitoring (SAM) and advocacy initiatives on water, in Tanzania and elsewhere.

Uhakika ran from April 2013 until March 2016, with a total budget of £249,999 funded by a DFID's Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF) Innovation Grant (now renamed UK Aid Direct). The project was led by Water Witness International (WWI), in partnership with the Tanzanian non-governmental organisation (NGO) Shahidi wa Maji, government institutions directly involved in water resource management (WRM), and the Tanzania Network for Water and Sanitation, each of whom contributed core team members who carried out direct project activities. Additional water sector stakeholders were also involved in an advisory function, through the Project Advisory Committee (PAC).

Community-level activities were implemented across ten sites in Tanzania, with the intention of reaching 240,000 people with improved levels of water security. The project had the long-term goal of improving sector performance more widely, to ensure that the water which vulnerable people need for their livelihoods is legally recognised and protected from pollution, depletion and competing claims. It aimed to achieve this by using SAM to generate evidence about the performance of government agencies responsible for the sustainable management of water resources, and to produce advocacy material drawn from this evidence to improve sector performance on WRM.

This executive summary focuses on achievements and challenges for both community-level and national-level activities, after a brief summary of these for the project overall. The summary ends with recommendations for future programmes. Only brief evaluative conclusions are given here – the full report provides the evidence behind each conclusion.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation is based on a two-week visit to Tanzania and extensive review of project documentation. Meetings were conducted with 46 community members in four project sites, in addition to interviews with members of government agencies responsible for water management (11), key sector donors (4), civil society organisations (CSOs) and international non-governmental organisations (iNGOs) (8) and project staff (4) and the Project Advisory Committee (9).

Overall achievements

Overall, the project implemented the vast majority of its planned activities by project end, thanks to sustained efforts by the project team in-country. Activities were delivered on budget, and the project experienced only minor delays in delivery. At community-level, considerable progress was made towards raising the voice of small community-level water users. The project directly contributed towards increased water security for 159,000 people. At sector level, the project made important contributions to raising the profile of WRM, both within and outside the water sector. It highlighted specific, systemic challenges facing WRM processes, showcased the impacts these are having on communities using insights from case studies, and built the capability of civil society groups to positively influence the sector. This is likely to contribute to increased funding allocations to WRM in future. Few people would have predicted in 2013 that such a short-term advocacy project would have been able to contribute to tangible improvements in water security within only three years; the efforts that have been put in to achieve these results must be commended.

Overall challenges

The main challenges facing the project were limited project funds and a short time-frame, given that advocacy work often requires long-term engagement to embed and sustain impacts. Limited project funds permitted only two full-time equivalents as staff members, and the project was vulnerable to staff turnover and highly dependent on the commitment and skills of key personnel as a result. Restricted personnel and financial resources also limited the regularity of engagement with disparate project communities and project partners, who themselves faced high levels of staff turnover. In terms of external challenges, the sensitive political climate around the October 2015 presidential elections posed some challenges, and caused delays, for community and advocacy work. The project's full contribution is not yet visible in some logframe indicators at impact and outcome level, as advocacy work often requires long-term engagement to embed and sustain impacts. However, the advocacy work planned for mid-2016 with funding levered by this initial UK Aid Direct investment is likely to contribute to increased funding allocations to WRM in future.

Overall relevance of the project approach

The project's concept is highly relevant to the Tanzanian water sector, which currently faces multiple challenges in delivering water security: Due to increasing and competing water demands and ineffective WRM, there is a risk that water users with a less powerful voice will receive less equitable access to, or legal protection of, the water resources they need for health, livelihoods and economic development. As a result, the choice of a SAM framework is an appropriate design for raising the voice of less powerful water users. Therefore the project's choice of focusing its community work on small community-level water users who have a weaker voice on water is highly relevant. The project intended to raise the voice of these marginalised water users by increasing their capability to express their views and to demand their rights and entitlements, and by doing so to contribute to a more equitable WRM. Project sites were selected that were well suited for such advocacy purposes. The project was designed in such a way that if the government was responsive to the demands of small-scale community-level users, this would improve water security for project communities in the immediate future. If not, the project could use their lack of response to obtain insights into the root causes of poor performance within the sector, and could use these insights for advocacy work.

Achievements of community-level work

At community level, the project was effective in empowering project change agents ('Mashahidi' – water witnesses, in Kiswahili) to generate and implement Action Plans (APs), with the intention of improving the protection of water resources which communities depend on for their livelihoods:

- Ten sites were selected for the implementation of community-based activities. During initial site visits a variety of participatory approaches were used to explore the nature and severity of water insecurity issues faced, and identify those community groups that were most affected. 603 people engaged in this participatory analysis across the ten project sites and **90% reported improved awareness of water resource rights, obligations and institutional responsibilities.**
- 84 community members volunteered to become Mashahidi. Of these, the project worked closely with 37 Mashahidi across eight project sites¹. **Overall, 92% reported having a greater understanding of legal rights, obligations and responsibilities relating to water security, and reported an intention to act on this knowledge.** All Mashahidi interviewed through the evaluation stated that they gained a better understanding of the responsibilities of institutions, including how to apply for a water use permit (WUP) and who to contact within the relevant authorities. As a result of this, the Mashahidi interviewed felt that the project directly contributed to helping their views be better expressed and better heard.

¹ Activities in two out of ten project sites were put on hold pending additional funding under Phase II.

- **While some agreed APs took longer to be implemented, the majority (87%) were implemented across eight project sites by project end.** Community-level activities were delivered at a lower cost than planned (£0.79 per person, compared to £1.00). The project used its limited resources efficiently thanks to tight financial management.
- Achieving positive impacts for the water security of affected communities was an ambitious objective within the three-year time-frame. Nonetheless, the project contributed to positive impacts in many communities. Positive impacts were more likely where the response to an AP was more within the control of the project or community, or where the solutions were within relatively easy reach of responsible authorities. Examples of improvements in water security achieved include the reduced dumping of solid waste, supporting processes for the construction of a new water treatment facility, and more secure water supply achieved through WUPs issued, and by helping to establish or helping to strengthen two Water User Associations (WUAs). **Overall, the project directly contributed towards increased water security for 159,000 people.** In the two project sites where WUPs were secured, communities felt that thanks to having a more secure water supply they were able to have more reliable agricultural yields. One irrigation scheme was able to use their WUP as collateral to secure a financial loan.

Challenges for community-level work

The tight time-frame, limited funds and limited staffing of the project posed minor challenges for the implementation of community-level work. **Some Mashahidi reported that more frequent visits by project staff would have allowed APs to be implemented more quickly, and would have improved and maintained their motivation.** The budget allowed most project sites to be visited three to four times during the three-year project. Funding shortfalls also posed challenges in regard to establishing a support network through which Mashahidi could continue to obtain advice and minor financial support after project end. **Mashahidi from four out of the six interviewed communities felt they could have benefited from targeted training to allow them to continue to pursue responsible government agencies alone after project end.**

- In terms of external factors, the motivation of Mashahidi themselves played a role in whether the issues flagged in APs were pursued persistently enough with the government to solicit a response. **Nine out of 37 Mashahidi became less active over the project lifecycle, which appears to be one of the reasons why not all APs were implemented.**
- **A key challenge was securing a favourable response from relevant government authorities on WUP application and on pollution control within the project time-frame.** Twelve out of 18 WUP applications (relating to two project sites) were successful and one out of three sites saw enforcement action on pollution by responsible authorities. Those water security achievements that were associated with legal recognition of water rights (WUPs issued; WUA processes strengthened) are highly likely to continue to be protected in future. However, the unintended water security improvements achieved thanks to awareness-raising by Mashahidi may not be sustained as there is a risk that communities may resume waste dumping in rivers, and may not continue flood-protection measures for their agricultural fields.
- **It was challenging to manage expectations at community level in some project sites, where the project was not able to facilitate a resolution to their water issues within the project time-frame.** Some Mashahidi who did not receive a favourable response to their AP request intended to pursue a more confrontational approach. In two sites affected by pollution, Mashahidi for example intended to contact the media. Confrontational approaches could jeopardise the project's constructive advocacy approach with the government but so far **no evidence of negative impacts was found**, such as reprisals as a result of advocacy work.

Achievements of national-level advocacy work and dissemination activities

The advocacy strategy was designed mid-way through the project; deliberately phased so that it could be informed by insights from the community-level work. Advocacy activities were designed to raise the knowledge and awareness of government staff and political leaders, of key stakeholders within and outside the water sector, and of the general public on water management issues and the structural constraints that underlie them – and to instil a greater sense of ownership over, and a duty to resolve, these issues. The intended outcome of these activities according to the logframe was to increase budget allocation to the Basin Water Boards (BWBs), frontline authorities of the Ministry for Water and Irrigation (MoWI), with the impact of improving sector performance. Most advocacy activities were completed at the time of the evaluation.

- **Four national ‘learning-by-doing’ workshops with government and other sector stakeholders were successful in raising awareness amongst attendees.** Of the 110 individuals who attended, 76% reported newly acquired capability and intent to apply the knowledge gained. Furthermore, involving BWB and National Environment Management Council (NEMC) staff directly in the implementation of community-level project activities also provided the unintended benefits of enhanced workplace motivation amongst staff.
- **The project generated important insights into the specific challenges relating to WRM processes, and showcased the impacts this is having on communities using insights from case studies.** These were communicated to government, donors and the public. **The presentations at the Joint Water Sector Review (JWSR) in 2014 and 2015 were particularly effective.** Advocacy messages aimed at the public included TV spots and radio dramas.
- **A participatory analysis of the budget allocation, expenditure flows and staffing levels** within MoWI was undertaken in 2014. This analysis clearly highlighted the staffing and funding shortfalls facing BWBs, allowing the project to advocate for increased allocations to BWBs.
- To share the approach and lessons-learned of the project, a project handbook was produced and shared at a regional learning event attended by national CSOs and by regional CSO from eight African countries. Insights were also shared with global practitioners through a variety of webinars and conferences, including at Stockholm World Water Week.

Challenges for national advocacy work and dissemination activities

The tight time-frame, **limited project funds and limited staffing of the project** posed challenges as regards the extent of advocacy work that could be undertaken. As a result, outreach work planned with parliament and the technical policy briefs were delayed until mid-2016. Limited project funds also posed some challenges in regard to the depth and quality of the budget and expenditure analysis undertaken in 2014, as the difficulties in obtaining reliable data on budgets from government stretched the resources available for this work.

In terms of external factors beyond the project’s control:

- The political climate around the Oct 2015 presidential elections caused delays to advocacy work. For example, the production of TV spots and radio dramas could only be aired in Feb. 2016.
- The availability of BWB and NEMC staff and staff turnover within donors posed some challenge in regard to sector engagement. High turnover within the project’s regional partners (FAN and ANEW) also posed some challenges to disseminating the project’s approach.
- The project’s full contribution is not yet visible in some logframe indicators at impact and outcome level. Advocacy work often requires long-term engagement to embed and sustain impacts, which posed challenges in setting impact-level indicators for advocacy work, given the extensive contextual factors affecting sector performance. While the project accompanied advocacy messages with clear recommendations, the technical policy briefs detailing how these recommendations could be implemented were not yet completed at the time of the evaluation,

which may have limited the project's impact on sector performance to date. As a result, while a four-fold increase in donor funding to WRM was seen over the lifetime of the project, interviewed donors reported that this was made independently of the project. However, advocacy work planned for mid-2016 with funding levered thanks to this project is likely to contribute to increased funding allocations to WRM in future.

Recommendations

The bullet points below set out key recommendations for immediate action by the project team (within six months):

- **Draw together policy guidance targeted at the upcoming water legislation reform** to inform the upcoming water legislation amendments planned by the Tanzanian government.
- **Update case study bulletins** to capture in detail the impacts achieved in each site, to demonstrate to others the value of the approach.
- **Capture practical lessons from project implementation and management** (specific examples of lessons to be captured provided in Section 5). These lessons would complement the handbook already drafted by the project, to ensure the rich insights of the team provide important learning for organisations hoping to replicate the approach in future.

The following bullet points set out the recommendations for the project team's future work on SAM in Tanzania, as well as replications of the approach in WWI's work in Zambia and elsewhere:

- **Draw up a detailed theory of change (TOC) to more clearly illustrate and communicate the design** of the project to an external audience.
- **At design stage, the political risks to project delivery should be more thoroughly assessed**, and should be accompanied by appropriate mitigation plans.
- **At design stage, ensure sufficient resourcing for on-going liaison and joint planning with government and donors**, to ensure that insights from advocacy work inform the government capacity-building work of other donors.
- **Secure sufficient funding for recruiting and retaining a large enough team of adequately experienced staff** to support more effective government, community and partner engagement. Such staffing would also allow government performance to be tracked more regularly, through annual budget and expenditure analysis.
- **Provide additional training and adequate resources and time to support monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and learning.** For example, additional training on M&E techniques for staff and clearer recording templates could facilitate more efficient M&E. Dedicated external or internal monitoring, evaluation and learning support should be considered.
- **Provide more structured support and advice for Mashahidi. Together with more regular engagement** this will increase the likelihood of Mashahidi continuing to engage with responsible government agencies in future.
- **Sufficient funding should be secured to allow a greater number of TAWASANET partners to be involved in direct project delivery**, in order to increase the likelihood of other organisations scaling up the approach in other regions of Tanzania.

Finally, the bullets below set out recommendations for promoting a SAM approach in future:

- Given the beneficial results seen from this project, both at community-level and at national level, and the regional and global interest expressed in the approach, **it is recommended that social accountability work within the WRM sector be continued and strengthened.**

- **It is recommended that a higher level of longer-term funding be made available to fund social accountability work.** The funds available via GPAF were too short-term to secure the full potential benefits of SAM for equitable WRM.
- **Donors involved in the Water Sector Development Programme (WSDP) should collaborate more closely with social accountability initiatives** by sharing data on commitments and disbursements made and by engaging with the recommendations coming out of social accountability work.
- **To allow the approach to be adjusted for use in other countries, it is recommended to carry out detailed political economy analysis, and assessments of partner needs and capability** prior to designing the approach in each country, to ensure that the design reflects the sectoral context of the country.