

**Report on the WASHCost Learning Alliance facilitation
in Burkina Faso:**

Interviews of the Learning Alliance facilitator and the Research
Director.



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INTRODUCTION

The WASHCost project researches the life cycle unit disaggregated costs of water hygiene and sanitation services delivery. WASHCost is not a mere research project but also a new approach to improved WASH governance highlighting the use of accurate unit cost for planning and budgeting in the WASH sector. Its overall methodology is based on a participative action research through the involvement of the sector actors in its implementation in Burkina Faso, Mozambique Ghana and India. The current document accounts for the settlement and facilitation of the Learning Alliance, a year after the start up of the project and of this framework. This document is developed following two main sections: the facilitation of the whole LA by the country coordinator and the research director's endeavour in involving the Task Force, a Key component of the LA in research activities in WASHCost Burkina Faso.

The facilitation of the Learning Alliance in Burkina is led by the Country Coordinator who kindly accepted to release information for this report through an interview.

1 The facilitation of the overall Learning Alliance

1.1 Introduction of the section

The Learning Alliance is, according to the Country Coordinator, “a platform for learning and sharing in the WASH sector regarding WASHCost approach”. In Burkina Faso-as the country Coordinator put it “it is expected from this platform to take part in reflections in order to improve the local WASH governance and to be a medium for the prospective dissemination of the WASHCost research outputs. In a word, learning and sharing are the key missions of the LA in Burkina”.

1.2 The LA set-up in Burkina Faso WASH sector: a step-by-step process

1.2.1 Understanding the WASH sector



the facilitator reported that “the Setting-up a Learning Alliance was made easy by the strong willingness of sector actors to share experiences and reinforce capacities in water governance, the more as they were

used to similar interactions”. In addition, the notoriety of the Regional Center for low cost Water supply and Sanitation (CREPA) headquarters, the host institution helped this process. However, the project precursors initiated few sensitizations and advocacy activities towards key actors to spread an initial understanding of the starting project which can be described as an approach to improved WASH governance. The launch of the project in September 2008 was the kick off event in informing the whole sector about the WASHCost project.

1.2.2 Assessing the sector

The sector assessment occurred through an institutional mapping which is described by the Facilitator as “a mirror of the sector which provided information on the state of knowledge, practices and attitudes, precisely on the existing governance and interactions between actors, the links between the categories of actors, the magnitude of those relationships, etc.” The Learning Alliance is to the facilitator a mixed group made up of different categories of sector actors some of whom are new and lack skills and knowledge.

To sum up, existing knowledge and practices and the lack of disaggregated unit costs have provided stuff to motivate the creation of the Learning Alliance. According to the interviewee, targeting exclusively at institutions lacking unit cost “would be inadequate” and WASHCost just wanted “sample few actors to influence others”,

1.2.3 Management activities

The LA members attend quarterly workshops intended for them and the content has always been decided with their consent. The number of the participants varies between 15-20 country actors.

Though the impact assessment workshop was an international workshop, WASHCost Burkina Faso team members involved few country actors to prepare them to influencing national platforms later. He states: “This workshop gave knowledge on how to measure the importance of the LA in implementing the project at country level”

In-between of the previously mentioned workshops, WASHCost team members attend meetings organized by the stakeholders and the Learning Alliance members.

The facilitator added: “Apart from general LA meetings, the Task Force members are used to meet on ad hoc basis to participate in specific activities regarding research”

He is glad that “the Learning Alliance members are sometimes invited or receive team visits in order to have professional discussions with them” he even added that “the exchange of

mails and telephone calls are also given importance in strengthening the ties with the national partners”.

1.3 Use of Learning Alliance in promoting WASHCost in the Burkina Faso WASH sector

The promotion of WASHCost approach is also a major reason why WASHCost organizes training workshops and take part in meetings organized by partners. These meetings are for the facilitation, sharing opportunities too.

The first Learning Alliance meeting occurred in January (29-30) on the following topic: “a strategic and participative approach to improved water governance”. The most recent Learning Alliance meeting on the topic “Finance and cost recovery” in Burkina was specifically intended to improve actor understanding of unit costs according to WASHCost. The last meeting proved once again that actors consider most often the market prices which are most of the time CapEx costs, dixit the facilitator who next argues that there is then the need to increase their knowledge of the other cost components such as the CapManEx, the OpEx...he is convinced that communication activities contribute much in the promotion through the use of flyers, the newsletter...soulder promotional activities are still to be developed. So far, the launch of the project has been the biggest promotional activity.

1.4 Responsibilities in LA management in Burkina Faso

Regarding the management of the Learning Alliance, “all are responsible in an informal way. Learning Alliance members are tied by a horizontal relationship and what matters is their commitment and active participation in the project implementation”.

The outstanding role in the management of the Learning Alliance is the facilitation which is mainly carried out by the country Coordinator. However, the facilitation of the Learning Alliance requires a team work as the country coordinator puts it: “the Learning Alliance facilitation is decentralized to all team members in the project who are involved in various components regarding logistic, content preparation, documentation, communication and research. The facilitation is even extended to the regional governance Specialist. At the beginning, it was extended to include regional cooperation between Ghana and Burkina Faso”.

1.5 Success areas in the management of the Learning Alliance in Burkina Faso

The LA facilitator describes the early success with the LA as follows: “WASHCost project has achieved a lot in Burkina Faso. The involvement of the LA members in the project activities, their availability and their participation to meetings are effective success areas so far. In fact, the participation rate to the meetings is of satisfaction regarding the number of sectors activities. They have been facilitating not only access to data but the whole research data collection through their decentralized agencies in the countries. It is also encouraging to witness that they agree on unit costs going beyond the capital expenditure costs. The partners contribute in the implementation of the project by making suggestions on the meetings. Task Force members are actively involved in research activities. They always lead the selection of data collection areas and contribute to data analysis. The current assessment of the LA may raise more about this success.”

1.6 Challenging issues related to the Learning Alliance.

One of the biggest challenges to me is to get the LA members more involved and alleviate the irregular representations of the institutions in the LA meetings. The biggest imminent challenge is that actors are anxious to access the research results. It would also be good to organize exchanges between LA actors in different WASHCost countries to increase awareness on LA member’s involvement. It is worthy mentioning that the ongoing assessment of the Learning Alliance is a challenge by itself and that it may come out with new threats and weaknesses.” The Burkina Faso LA facilitator explores the possibility to bring together all existing WASH platforms into a unique LA.

The LA facilitator pointed out the low circulation of the cost information, namely on market prices.

1.7 No formal feedback on the management of the LA from the LA members

Considering that “So far, there is no formal reaction from the LA members on the management of their platform” and that “The partners rather contribute in reflexion on the organization of the workshops” it is arguable that the management of the LA is satisfactory. More details may yield from the ongoing survey. The partners responses will help find out

which steps have been helpful for the management of the platform. Global meetings and newsletters are used for peer exchange on Learning Alliance facilitation.

1.8 Hopes regarding further collaboration with the Learning Alliance in Burkina Faso.

“The national context is favorable to the development of the Learning Alliance and the promotion of the WASHCost project. I hope that the project in general and specifically the LA will keep on track. I expect the Learning Alliance members to keep facilitating the secondary data collection and their share within the Learning Alliance. In this regard, he wishes that WASHCost organizes the share of secondary cost data between actors having unit costs and those lacking them.

He is looking forward to updating the Finance ministry planning tool known as “mercurial”.

1.9 Conclusion of the section

From the interview of the Learning Alliance facilitator in Burkina –as reported above- we can infer that the Learning Alliance is on the good track in Burkina Faso. More light on its functioning will come from the ongoing assessment of the same. The WASHCost Burkina Faso Learning Alliance facilitator points out that the various networks and platforms in the national WASH sector are led by almost the same members, hence he would support any initiative tending to gather them into one with good and sustainable objectives for the sector development. The very dear wish of the country Coordinator and Learning Alliance facilitator is the success in determining disaggregated unit costs of the WASH services to fill the actor’s needs.

2 Interview of the research Director on the involvement of the task force in WAHSCost research activities

2.1 Introduction and definition of the Task Force



The WASHCost Burkina Faso Research Director Dr. Amah Klutsé, PhD defines the Learning Alliance as follows: “a group of WASH actors who have joined the WASHCost project in order to take part in the research on unit costs for the improvement of the WASH governance in Burkina Faso. On the one hand, the Learning Alliance is a platform deemed to help actors learn and share experiences. Besides, it prepares them to later embed the project research outputs.”

He next defined the Task force as “the component of the Learning Alliance that is particularly involved in research activities”.

Klutse defines his role in it as to provide the group members with a good understanding of the WASHCost research methodology and seek the commitment of the members in improving this research methodology and implementing research activities.”

2.2 Membership

The most remarkable institutions members of the Task Force according to the Research director are:

The University of Ouagadougou,

The University of Bobo,

The General Directorate of Water resources known in French as “Direction Générale des Ressources en eau (DGRE)”,

The National Environmental and Agricultural research Institute, known in French as, “Institut national de Recherche environnementale et Agricole” (INERA),

the national Scientific and Technological Research Centre known in French as “Centre National de Recherche Scientifique et Technologique (CNRST)”,

the Catholic Organisation for Development and Solidarity known in French as “Organisation Catholique pour le Developpement et la Solidarité (OCADES)”,

the Regional Centre for low cost Water Supply and Sanitation (CREPA),

The International Water and Environnement Engineering Institute known in French as “Institut **International d’Ingénierie** de l’Eau **et** de l’Environnement (2ie)”.

Most of them have attended the launch of the WASHCost project. The participants to the meetings are selected by the partner institutions.

2.3 Mapping the state of unit costs at the start of the WASHCost project.

At the start of the WASHCost project, a sector assessment was initiated. This gave information on the lack of disaggregated unit costs in the WASH sector.

2.4 Meetings

The research director describes the meetings content and agenda in few lines: “Task Force members meet on ad hoc basis. Some Task Force members also take part in training sessions deemed for the broad LA as they are included in it. They usually share information on the project and the research methodology, the validation of data collection tools and strategies, the selection of pilot sites and the restitution of data collection results. When there is a pilot, the project team members always meet the actors intervening in the targeted areas. This is facilitated by the Task Force members. Besides, a specific institution can be entrusted a particular mission, according to their competences and WASHCost needs.

Apart from organising meetings for the Task Force, WASHCost Task Force team members participate in sector meetings.”

2.5 The process in setting up the task force

Amah KLUTSE, explains the process: “Setting up the Task force follows the general project progress, precisely the progress of the LA. The project team tries to involve them as long as research goes on. Nowadays, the LA is well set up in the centre of the country and is being set up in regions.

The LA set up usually follows two major steps: informing the sector actors, and next associating them in activities.”

2.6 Difficulties encountered regarding the enrolment of LA in research

One of the difficulties is that “the members are not regular to the meetings” according to the Research Director.

The multiplicity of meetings in the sector makes it difficult for task Force members to attend all our LA or Task Force meetings. “Actors are free and sometimes prioritise other meetings. The consequence is that the participants from the same institution may shift many times.”

However, there is no reticence because WASHCost is a project implemented by the Regional Centre for low cost Water Supply and Sanitation (CREPA) which is well known in the WASH sector”.

2.7 Achievements

The success with general LA and specifically the Task Force is that the members of these platforms contribute in the project progress. The research director is glad that they are always available when WASHCost needs them. He illustrated this availability by few examples:

So far, the Task Force members have been involved in three pilots: the first one occurred at Saaba between December and January 2009, the second in Ouahigouya area in May 2009 and the most recent one which combined Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya areas in September 2009. Thanks to the collaboration with the Task Force, partners from these areas have been involved to facilitate the collection process and the finding of secondary data. Some other contributions of the partners in research are stated in the following:

-The University of Ouagadougou had supplied for database manager during the two early data collection and the one of Bobo gave a data analyst for the recent pilot. Both universities are to take part to the recent pilot data analysis”

-The Regional Centre for Agriculture and water resources “DRAHRH” serves as a focal point for WASHCost in the North of the country.

-The Catholic Organisation for development and Solidarity “OCADES” has supplied data collectors for the previous pilot. Communes facilitate the team interventions in the field.

-The General Water Directorate (DGRE) is collecting information on the costs of the WASH facilities and plans to share them with us.

-CREPA Burkina provides data collectors for all pilots

2.8 Challenges and hopes

For the Research director the challenge is « to soon generate the promised data that the partners are also expecting »

Amah Klutsé hopes the Task Force will come out with good outputs for the WASHCost project in Burkina. That is why he states: “the group has the required capacities to carry out reflexions and accurate advocacy for the dissemination of research outputs. Moreover, the lack of reliable data in the sector means that the sector is favourable to the embedding of the research data. The existing political willingness is another asset for the WASHCost project. The team just has to find and share the unit disaggregated cost of the WASH services.”

2.9 Conclusion of the section

One year after the initiation of the LA in Burkina Faso, WASHCost Burkina Faso team members there are as well success areas as challenges regarding the management of this platform. The initiation if this platform has proven very useful to boost the information share in the WASH sector and make the implementation of the WASHCost project a participative process. Despite the success areas, keeping LA members involved and achieving the actual success of the research remain the big challenges. At last, mainstreaming the Task is an ongoing process.

CONCLUSION

Considering the collaboration with the Learning Alliance members so far, as seen from the general facilitator and the research director, the success and challenges it can be said that this learning and sharing framework has been well led so far. However, the future success resides on the outcomes of the research and a constant communication with the LA members.