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Analysis of the MUS learning alliance process in Nepal

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This paper draws on research conducted by International Development Enterprises (IDE) in Nepal as part of a multi-country action-research project on Multiple-Use Water Services (MUS) approaches. As one component of the action-research project, IDE-Nepal fostered a MUS learning alliance of government and non-government organizational partners to share the multiple-use concept, obtain support for project implementation, and explore methods for scale-up of the approach within Nepal. The paper analyzes the two-pronged learning alliance method used at the community, district, and national levels including the successful linkages and critical gaps. The genesis of partner thought throughout the learning alliance process is outlined and the various outcomes and drawbacks at the community, district, and national levels explored. Various barriers to scale-up of the MUS approach are catalogued, and strategies suggested by partners discussed. In addition, the paper includes an internal reflection of the experience of employing the learning alliance approach, future directions of IDE's involvement, and the constraints faced.

The learning alliance in Nepal was initiated by IDE as part of the CP-MUS action research project on methods for expanding awareness of multiple-use water services (MUS) and examining up-scaling methods. The learning alliance in Nepal attempted to bring together all stakeholders at both the district and national levels to obtain support for MUS project implementation and disseminate the idea of multiple-use water services throughout the country.

Methodology

Information in this document is based largely on personal and group interviews conducted by Monique Mikhail during February to May, 2007 as part of the CP-MUS project. The CP-MUS project was funded by a grant from the Challenge Program on Water and Food with the International Water Management Institute as the lead organization.¹ The CP-MUS project implementation in Nepal largely occurred through the Smallholder Irrigation and Market Initiative (SIMI).² Various SIMI staff were interviewed along with NGO and government partners. The individuals chosen were those within each government organization and NGO partner that had been the most involved in either MUS project implementation at the district level or the Learning Alliance at the national level. The SIMI and related IDE/Winrock MUS experience is documented in "Mikhail, M., Yoder, R. (2009). *Multiple Use Water Service Implementation in Nepal and India: Experience and Lessons for Scale-up*. In Press." More information on the CP-MUS project can be found at www.musproject.net.

Beginnings of MUS-by-design in Nepal

IDE has historically worked with individual households to access appropriate technologies for increased income. In line with this technique, SIMI worked with smallholder farmers to use micro irrigation technologies, grow high value crops, and connect with local markets. However, IDE had not previously been involved in developing water sources for farmers. Instead, those farmers who purchased micro irrigation kits were predominantly using water from their existing domestic water systems for irrigation of kitchen gardens. SIMI staff recognized that use of domestic systems was limiting because the systems

were not designed to provide enough water for irrigation in addition to domestic supply. It was also difficult to carry sufficient water for irrigation from the domestic taps. Additionally, some communities did not have a water system at all, but were required to carry water from the nearest spring or stream. Others had old systems that were no longer sufficient for even their basic domestic needs.

Some technical staff realized that if they built a hybrid domestic-irrigation system, not only would they provide much-needed domestic water, but also enable the expansion of micro irrigation technology use, and save precious water collection time that could be used for vegetable cultivation. Thus, a meeting with the entire SIMI technical team was held in July 2003 to discuss the best way to develop water resources for irrigation. They decided to design the new multiple-use systems based on the model of gravity flow domestic water systems in the hills. Two designs emerged from these first few systems and are explained in Mikhail and Yoder, 2009.

These new multiple-use systems received high praise from the communities and resulted in better outcomes than where SIMI had worked only on micro irrigation without developing the water source. Due to the success, they were incorporated into several IDE/Winrock programs.

Two-tiered approach – practical and conceptual advocacy

Although IDE worked to develop a formal learning alliance, particularly at the national level, the expansion of the MUS concept occurred far more organically. Because IDE had not originally planned on water source development as part of the SIMI project, there were insufficient project funds to construct MUS systems. Thus, SIMI decided to put a cap on the amount provided to each community and required each community to search for matching funds to secure their project. With the help of SIMI staff, communities approached their local and district governments, the Village Development Committee (VDC) and District Development Committee (DDC), respectively, as well as NGOs working in their area and district level line agencies. It sometimes took multiple meetings with the same official to secure their support. If it proved overly difficult for the community to secure local level funding, SIMI staff sought funding at the national level. The search for matching funds built rapport between the communities and their funding partners and improved the communities' ability to advocate for itself. The search also developed partnerships between SIMI and other organizations operating in the same districts. As the program progressed, these partners would refer new communities to SIMI for MUS projects. The communities also extended invitations to partners to attend village level meetings, consultation meetings, and trainings throughout the process. Partners became a part of the implementation process, building linkages between all stakeholders. Exposure visits were held including visits of one community to another, of potential partner NGOs and GOs, and of national-level officials and international visitors. These site visits proved to be a powerful practical advocacy technique.

SIMI recognized that in addition to the practical advocacy occurring at the district level, there was a need for broader knowledge sharing of the concept and exploration of ways to move policy forward in support of MUS. This conceptual advocacy began with the creation of a MUS brochure for outreach activities. SIMI staff met bilaterally with potential learning alliance partners at the national level, starting with organizations they already had relationships with. They shared the idea of MUS and some of the results that were beginning to come out of the systems that had been built.

In September of 2005 SIMI held the first national learning alliance workshop, including representatives from many existing and potential partner organizations. The concept of MUS was introduced and SIMI had community representatives explain their system operation and the impacts in their community. Six months after this first workshop a follow-up meeting was held with a smaller group of organizations that had expressed interest to continue with the learning alliance and a few others that had not been present at the first workshop. A discussion was held about who should lead the learning alliance activities at the district level and two organizations were debated – the National Federation of Irrigation Water Users Association, Nepal (NFIWUAN) and the Federation of Water & Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN). In the end, NFIWUAN was chosen because they had a more established network than FEDWASUN. A week later, SIMI staff met with NFIWUAN and although they stated that they did not have funding to work on the learning alliance, they indicated that they could raise the money. SIMI agreed to take key national level learning alliance partners for an exposure visit to some of the existing MUS projects. After this positive experience, SIMI realized that combining the practical and conceptual advocacy was very useful, so they held a second national-level learning alliance workshop in May, 2006 that included representatives from organizations in the Lalitpur District, the district adjacent to Kathmandu.

These national level workshops were successful at both increasing awareness about MUS as well as obtaining funding for future projects. Therefore, at the beginning of 2007, SIMI staff conducted three district-level workshops (Kaski, Palpa, and Lalitpur) to enhance the practical advocacy already occurring at the district level. These district-level workshops were held in March, April, and July 2007, respectively and both existing and potential partners were invited. The Kaski and Palpa workshops consisted of presentations by existing partners about the current MUS work as well as brainstorming of the roles, barriers to scale-up encountered, and areas of improvement in operations of various stakeholders – GOs, NGOs, local government, and communities. The Lalitpur workshop focused more on discussion about enabling MUS at the national level.

The MUS concept continued to spread through the effort of partner organizations. Most partners said that they regularly shared the concept within their organizations, with village communities, donors, other partners they work with, and at meetings and conferences. The more excited a partner was about MUS, the more they shared the approach.

Partner views of the MUS concept

Despite workshops where MUS was discussed by various partners, the difference in how directly involved partners were with implementation created differing ideas about what “multiple-use services” actually meant. Due to the type of systems that SIMI had developed, focusing on provision of water for domestic use and micro irrigation, many partners felt that the systems should be called “dual-use water systems” instead of “multiple-use water systems”. Others broadened their vision to include uses that were not currently part of SIMI MUS systems but could be, such as micro hydro. Interestingly, when speaking to communities about other potential uses they were interested in, they listed fish ponds, fruit crops, food processing, and growth of fodder to enable more livestock.

This feedback adheres with another statement that many partners made: MUS is not a new concept to villagers. More than any other partner, villagers understand and apply the multiple-use concept, despite the limited-use systems that the government or NGOs have developed for them. The NFIWUAN representative stated that farmer-managed irrigation systems were *de facto* multiple-use and that ‘MUS’ was just a term for traditional irrigation systems. Several interviewees supported this statement, claiming that MUS was not a new idea but simply a representation of existing villager practices.

Those who were familiar with the integrated water resource management (IWRM) concept reflected that although the government included IWRM in their national water plan, they had not found a way to actualize it; MUS might be just the solution. An engineer with the Non-Conventional Irrigation Technology Project (NITP) within the Department of Irrigation stated that MUS was a way to “realize the true sense of IWRM”. The MUS concept was seen by most as a way to more effectively and sustainably manage water resources. A few partners felt that this meant that MUS was actually a technology that allowed proper use of water. The NITP engineer stated that MUS systems were a “good combination of traditional thought and modern technology”.

Although partners had various takes on the concept of MUS, all felt that it was relevant for Nepal. Nepal is a water rich country but most of the population has limited access. Uneven seasonal rainfall and geographical complexities effect distribution. Sources, primarily springs when domestic use is included, are often small in the middle hills. While frequently water sources are shared among neighboring communities, they have remained largely underdeveloped. Since MUS was considered to be an efficient way of managing water resources and the systems that were built had effectively tapped small sources in the hills, enabling irrigation with less water through micro irrigation systems, sources that had previously been dismissed as too small were now considered usable for small hill community water supply. Others highlighted the importance of MUS for helping poor farmers with small landholdings, assisting those who previously had not had access to water for productive use, or at least only for their rice paddies. Some partners felt that MUS had more of a community ownership approach than traditional water delivery systems in Nepal, leading to better community management. Others felt that MUS is only a small change from the current domestic water delivery systems in Nepal yet had significantly larger benefits for communities because of the productive use component. The NITP engineer stated that MUS required minimal extra management and cost but generated large returns.

Outcomes

The major outcomes of the MUS learning alliance were an evolution of the way partners perceived water resources development and service delivery in the middle hills, and subsequent financial and political support for the approach. Partners received much more positive feedback than usual with MUS projects. World Vision was surprised that after participating in one pilot study in Kaski, neighboring communities were requesting MUS systems. Most other partners echoed the same: wherever a system was built, neighboring communities were requesting them. SIMI staff found that their biggest problem was that more communities were requesting MUS systems than they had staff and financial resources to build. However, farmers gaining access to a small amount of water for irrigation were more willing to contribute to MUS development than for conventional water supply schemes due to the small investment required, fast returns, involvement of women, and scheme ownership. The fact that water supply systems could be cost-effective was a surprise to some.

The Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Planning Division also proclaimed that MUS encouraged a new type of institutional collaboration. Although prior there was institutional collaboration on the supply side, it was growing on the demand side. He said that farmers are the force pushing government institutions to work together to adequately address the farmers' needs.

Perhaps the most significant change in a partner occurred within the Department of Irrigation through its fledgling NITP program. The NITP provided the most substantial support for MUS at the national level, causing an important internal shift within the broader Department. The NITP was initiated based on funder motivation to broaden the Departments' work, and was not well-received within the Department. Those who were tasked with the NITP were looking for a way to prove the value of non-conventional irrigation approaches and became connected with SIMI's work in micro irrigation and MUS. This partnership both strengthened SIMI's work and NITP's image within the Department. The NITP Coordinator described the situation a few years back when NITP was established: almost the entire department resisted smaller-scale projects and even at the field level NITP had difficulty motivating staff to work on small projects. But, in only a few years that mindset has drastically changed: Department engineers and overseers are motivated to work on small-scale projects because they see rapid and direct benefits of their work for communities.

As the ethos of government partners like the Department of Irrigation expanded to include MUS through involvement in both the practical and conceptual advocacy components of the learning alliance, funding support steadily increased. Other partners were also encouraged to provide support through advocacy efforts. Workshops proved an efficacious avenue to secure funding pledges from partners. For example, at the Palpa District Learning Alliance Workshop, the Western Region Sub divisional Irrigation Office Chief Divisional Engineer said that after the workshop he would allocate Rs. 50,000 (US\$ 714) per scheme for three MUS schemes within the year.

The district and national level learning alliance workshops were not only useful for securing financial support from partners, but also important for garnering public statements of support for MUS. The workshops generated the interest of potential partner organizations while existing partners brainstormed with each other about ways to overcome their previous hurdles in MUS implementation. Some partners requested technical training from SIMI in order to attempt their own projects. Others requested joint implementation with SIMI. For example, after the Joint National / Lalitpur district Workshop, the Manohari Development Institute decided to build 60 MUS systems in Makwanpur district with technical support from SIMI.

The more partner support SIMI generated for MUS, the more interest was generated with international donor and lending agencies. The Asian Development Bank funded a micro irrigation project headed by the NITP, and due to the IDE partnership with NITP on MUS and micro irrigation, IDE was invited to be part of the project and wrote a small MUS component into the proposal. As a result, one of the overall recommendations emerging from the project is the necessity of MUS for up-scaling micro irrigation.

Due to learning alliance efforts, a major MUS component was included in a 2007 Finnish International Development Agency project that focuses on encompassing all possibilities for water resource management in districts of the far western and mid-western regions of Nepal. The MUS work is incorporating pico-hydro or micro-hydro power in addition to domestic and micro irrigation uses. The Japan International Cooperation Agency is also planning to fund some MUS projects and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IDE to implement them.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the learning alliance in Nepal has been a critical step in policy: MUS has been included in DDC guidelines for VDC funds. Through activity on the SIMI advisory committee, the Ministry for Local Development has been involved in MUS development over the past five years. Their involvement led them to include MUS in their national fund allocation guidelines, a list of the types of development work the central government approves the district government to receive funding for.

The inclusion of MUS in the guidelines authorizes all district governments nationally to provide funding for MUS projects to local government bodies within their district.

Benefits and shortfalls of the learning alliance approach

Need for a common understanding

The learning alliance accomplished a great deal in expanding ideas of water resource development and generating funds for MUS projects, however, it fell short in creating a common understanding of the approach. When interviewing partners it became clear that there were differing ideas about what multiple-use services is and what it could be. Those who see MUS only as dual use, based on the SIMI model, are limiting the potential of the concept. On the other hand, throughout the interviews, ideas of incorporating other productive uses like fish ponds, micro hydro, or small-scale food processing were discussed. The incorporation of micro hydro is being tested through the Finnish International Development Agency project. And, many voiced concern for increased efforts in sanitation to accompany MUS projects.

The idea of MUS as a technology instead of an approach may also be limiting. The low-cost technologies that SIMI chose were suited for the middle hills of Nepal and worked well for the applications chosen. Other technologies may work better in different settings such as flatlands where groundwater is the source instead of springs.

Another handicap is varying views of scale. For example, the IWMI-Nepal representative interviewed saw MUS as scale-based: something that was primarily developed to address small-sized water needs that would not apply on a larger level. On the other hand, a “bigger is better” mentality still persists in government organizations, particularly the Department of Irrigation and Department of Agriculture. Some government officials’ feedback at workshops was that MUS projects have too small of an impact and displayed skepticism that small amounts of water were sufficient for irrigation. Furthermore, national level officials sometimes view small-scale projects as the responsibility of local institutions only, while district and local level officials feel they must have a mandate from the central level to act. The inclusion of MUS in DDC development guidelines is an important recent step to bridge this divide, yet varying opinions on scale still create disconnect between implementing NGOs and government organizations, particularly at the national level. If MUS is envisioned as only small-scale and government feels that small-scale is not worth the effort, it may limit support for MUS. The approach is thus handicapped, pointing to the importance of messaging within the learning alliance. The broadness of the concept should be explained and more attention paid to envisioning MUS for different topographies and models. Communities should have a menu of options to choose from to diversify productive use. The learning alliance could be a platform to encourage partners to attempt different manifestations of MUS instead of simply replicating SIMI’s model. The learning from these various applications could then be shared.

The importance of strategy

One factor leading to the variance in understanding of the MUS concept was the lack of a strategic plan for the learning alliance. The practical advocacy grew out of a need for more funds. The conceptual advocacy was a suggestion of international partners. And, while the two efforts were successful at bringing partners together at various levels and generating interest, there was a lack of overall strategic approach. Although staff regularly worked with well-established partner organizations in various projects, attempting to expand a concept through a knowledge-sharing network was a new challenge. Staff used techniques that were familiar to them, such as exposure visits and workshops. In some ways, the organic nature of the process led to avenues that may have been overlooked with a strategic framework. On the other hand, effort was wasted on partners that were not a good fit. The Department of Water Supply & Sewerage was consistently resistant to involvement in the learning alliance despite repeated efforts of IDE staff. Because IDE had never worked with this department, staff were unaware that they were unable to work on MUS because of an internal policy restricting them from working with populations under 1,000.³ Likewise, organizations that might have been beneficial partners were overlooked. The Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Roads housed within the Ministry of Local Development was not approached until later in the learning alliance, yet they work on small-scale drinking water projects in rural areas.

IDE also did not follow up sufficiently with partners in between workshops. The workshops were not regularly occurring, resulting in a dissipation of momentum between meetings. Only those who were actually involved in project implementation were regularly in communication between meetings. This led to

a die down of interest for the less involved partners and gaps in knowledge about the implementation activities that were occurring.

One reason for limited workshops was lack of resources. And, while it seemed a good idea to have NFIWUAN lead the learning alliance effort instead of IDE, they did not have and were unable to gather the resources necessary for the effort. This shows the importance of backing learning alliance approaches with appropriate funding.

Resistance to coordination

Yet, even if a strategic plan had been utilized for the learning alliance, it would have been impossible to completely change the embedded government resistance to coordination in the short project timeframe. Resistance remains to coordinating with other sectors in water provision or providing a service beyond the conventional mandate. Irrigation practitioners were much more likely to advocate for domestic practitioners to add irrigation provision to their systems than to include domestic provision in their own. Several irrigation practitioners stated that if a source had enough water, domestic water systems should incorporate irrigation. Conversely, domestic water practitioners were simply comfortable maintaining the conventional approach because they worried that domestic supply would suffer if irrigation were included. In the interviews, the most commonly listed problem with all government bodies was a lack of coordination and communication within, between, and among them. And, not only do the policies hinder coordination, but there is a culture within the government to meet their own organization's plan and minimize work with other government organizations.

Projects matched to community need

Despite many difficulties encountered during application of the learning alliance approach, it was a significant factor in positive reception of the MUS concept within Nepal. As most forms of advocacy, MUS would not have moved forward without dedicated champions at each level. These champions connected partners and advocated for communities to get support for projects. For example, in Lalitpur district, the Lele village had approached their District Agriculture Development Officer for help as a poor, lower caste community with no previous development activity in their village. He advocated for them to work with IDE on a MUS project.

These champions understood that the MUS systems were fulfilling an urgent need of the community. And, if a community need is adequately addressed by a project, they will become advocates of the approach themselves. This was most poignantly explained by a Water User Committee chairwoman at the Palpa Learning Alliance Workshop. SIMI had worked with her community to purchase micro irrigation systems for vegetable production but had not developed a water source. When the SIMI project ended, they stopped using the micro irrigation kits due to lack of available water. After hearing about MUS from a neighboring community, they re-approached SIMI, requesting help to develop their water source. Now they are not only regularly using the MUS system and micro irrigation kits, but are promoting MUS to other communities in the district. Although the learning alliance was important for sharing the MUS concept, it would have gone nowhere if the projects did not address real needs within communities.

Seeing is believing

Since the projects did address a community need, the best way to share the concept was to *show* people, and exposure visits became a critical motivator for partner support. Partners who were lukewarm about the concept before their field visit became advocates afterwards. Even the Department of Irrigation Director General was so impressed after his field visit that he approved increased funding for NITP. Some partners even encouraged the construction of pilot projects in every district across the country to provide an example for the district and local governments.

This truism also translated into a stronger emotional investment of partners at the district level than the national level. District-level partners were able to see the projects develop and participate in that development. Expanding site visits to those at the national level who had contributed financially to MUS projects increased their interest and enthusiasm. However, seeing one model of the approach made it difficult for some to envision different ways of actualizing the idea.

Importance of low-cost technologies and marketing

Showing MUS systems to partners also enabled SIMI to share its fundamental pillars of low-cost technologies and marketing for smallholders. Although SIMI had not previously developed water resources for community systems, the low-cost focus pervaded their approach. Due to the low cost and simplicity of the systems, it was easier to convince partners to contribute. Communities could provide labor and local materials and purchase their own micro irrigation kits. The systems could be constructed in 1-3 months on average, allowing partners to see the fruits of their contribution in a short time.

And, although application of the multiple-use water services concept could have taken shape by linking domestic water provision with any productive use component, SIMI chose to combine the domestic portion with water for micro irrigation of high value vegetable crops because of their mandate and previous experience. While any productive use component would have allowed smallholders to generate income and provided incentive for proper system management, micro irrigation was a good fit. Micro irrigation uses less water, meaning that small spring sources could provide enough supply for domestic purposes and irrigation. And, with production of vegetables and establishment of marketing committees, smallholders could increase their income within one growing season, displaying rapid changes in the community. These quick improvements were critical in encouraging the MUS concept with partners.

Potential for scale-up

Barriers

One of the major topics discussed at learning alliance workshops and in interviews was the possibility of MUS scale-up within the country. Several potential barriers emerged. While there are many spring sources in the middle hills of Nepal, they are not always near enough to the communities to make MUS work viable using the current model. And, even if a source is available, neighboring communities may not be allowed to access it or may be too small to serve larger settlements. These issues relate to fear of future water conflicts. Some feel that by providing water for irrigation in addition to domestic purposes, upstream users will capture too much water, limiting the availability for downstream users. Thus far these types of conflicts as well as inter-caste conflicts have been mitigated by intra- and inter- community negotiation of rights. The importance of these negotiations cannot be understated, and will become even more critical during scale-up. Since the procedure for registering source rights are also difficult and confusing with multiple government body involvement, users suggested that the process be streamlined for scale-up. In their interview, IWMI-Nepal suggested using a watershed-based approach for MUS to ensure that communities are not capturing water at the detriment of their neighbors or others elsewhere in the watershed. Additionally, a major concern with up-scaling is that if a majority of springs are captured for MUS, flow in the streams and rivers could diminish, harming important ecosystem services. A watershed approach that fostered communication between partners at various levels and multiple Water User Committees could provide the planning necessary to prevent these problems.

There are also many barriers within the government structure that limit scale-up. Partners mentioned that planning for NGOs and communities is difficult due to delay in the release of government budgets. Sometimes the government agrees to give matching funds for MUS projects, but delivery of materials and funds is delayed due to extensive bureaucratic processes and the cost of the MUS scheme increases daily during the delay. Government organizations are also limited by policy that reinforces the sectoral approach to water resource development. For example, the Kaski District Agriculture Development Officer mentioned that he cannot provide financial support for domestic tapstands, only piping. Respondents repeatedly cited the need for policy change at the central level. The inclusion of MUS in the DDC guidelines should help address this issue, however, each department must address the limitations in their policies and planning documents.

Increased partner support

In addition to policy adjustments, partners felt that scale-up will require increased partnership and support, particularly from government. Many even discussed the necessity of embedding MUS within a government body in order to secure regular funding, more easily incorporate the approach into department policy, and have dedicated manpower and infrastructure. However, many felt that if one department were to take responsibility, other departments would have less incentive to be involved because it would be someone else's mandate. Since MUS requires integration of various sectors, this could be detrimental. Ultimately,

most partners agreed that the district-level government should lead. They claimed that it was communities through the DDC/VDC structure that had been and must continue to push integration of water resource use and true coordination between government agencies.

However, despite the understanding that the DDC/VDC should lead MUS implementation, government bodies that receive financial support from large donors such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank expressed the need for these funders to support MUS to truly achieve scale-up. Similarly, NGO partners said that support was required from their funders to be more heavily involved in implementation. Although there has been some support for MUS from the Asian Development Bank and overtures have been made to the World Bank, partners are still a long way from receiving emphatic support and substantial sums of financial assistance for MUS scale-up.

In addition to the support of district and local level government and funding agencies, it was expressed that MUS scale-up would need increased participation of the domestic water and sanitation sector. Participants of the district level workshops expressed the sense that the irrigation component was highlighted more than the domestic component of SIMI MUS work. And, some partners expressed a need for a larger sanitation effort as part of MUS.

Continuation of the learning alliance

The increased support of partners will be sought through the continuation of the learning alliance. Although the SIMI project is complete, due to the success of MUS implementation, work will continue through other IDE-Nepal projects. To build on the important partnerships created through the learning alliance, bilateral work is ongoing, but is focused predominantly on project implementation. Since the practical advocacy component was so important for project implementation, these efforts will continue, largely at the district level. Thus, district-level partnerships will continue to grow. However, the frequency of learning alliance workshops has slowed at both the district and national levels due to limited funding available to support the conceptual advocacy efforts. Despite funding limitations, district-level workshops are being planned for Lalitpur and Surkhet (which has not previously had a workshop.) Field visits for government officials that have not yet seen MUS projects are also being planned. Discussions are underway with the Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Roads at the national level to provide funding for IDE technical support to place a pilot project in each district. IDE staff suggest that for MUS scale-up, IDE should provide technical training to partners so they can implement their own projects. IDE-Nepal and partners are continuing to press the large lending institutions to become involved in MUS, and make inroads with the domestic water and sanitation sector.

Conclusions

The two components of the MUS learning alliance approach in Nepal mutually reinforced one another and provided an interactive forum for IDE to learn from others and share experiences. It started with systems that fulfilled community needs in a low-cost way with quick rewards, and built on these efforts through advocacy of the approach. Practical advocacy was essential for securing funding for projects, developing partnerships with local and district-level partners, and building MUS advocates. Conceptual advocacy activities helped to share experiences and challenges, bring in new partners, and concretize the steps needed for future implementation. It was critical for those attending the learning alliance workshops to be able to hear from users about the changes in their villages as well as participate in exposure visits. While significant barriers remain, much headway has been made to both share the concept of multiple-use services and build partnerships for implementation. The SIMI model has been successful, but it manifests the multiple-use approach in only one way. For true scale-up that fits community needs and differences in topography, water availability and access, learning alliance partners should build on the SIMI experience and pilot their own versions of MUS. Vision of MUS possibilities should not be limited by scalar views and communities should be able to use water for a variety of productive applications. As additional government or donor funds are made available for MUS, building upon the already established learning alliance will enable rapid expansion by retaining and building on current partner knowledge, experience and lessons of the various models documented by the CP-MUS project.

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Notes

¹The Global Lead partners on the CP-MUS project are the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Netherlands; International Development Enterprises (IDE), USA; and Khon Kaen University (KKU), Thailand. Each Global Partner worked with local partner organizations in five different river basins around the world: the Andes, the Nile, the Indus-Gangetic, the Mekong, and the Limpopo basins.

² SIMI is a USAID funded project being implemented by Winrock International as the lead organization with International Development Enterprises (IDE) and local partners: the Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED), Support Activities for the Rural Poor (SAPPROS) and the Agricultural Enterprise Center (AEC).

³ The average size of a SIMI MUS project in Nepal is 36 households or around 215 people, well below the 1,000 and above limit for the Department of Water Supply & Sewerage.

Keywords

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