

SOCHA *(CARE)*

Mali WASH in Schools Mid-Term Evaluation



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MALI WASH IN SCHOOLS MID-TERM EVALUATION

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DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Dubai Cares.

ACRONYMS

AADEC	Association d'Appui a l'Auto-Développement Communautaire
ALPHALOG	Association Libre pour la Promotion de l'Habitat et du Logement
AMASBIF	Association Malienne pour la Sauvegarde du Bien-Être Familial
AMEs	Student/Mothers Associations
AMSS	Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sahel
ARDIL	Action Recherche pour le Développement d'Initiatives Locales
CAID	Cellule de Soutien des Initiatives de Développement
CAP	Centre d'Animation Pédagogique
CGS	Comité de Gestion Scolaire
CLOCSAD	<i>Comité Local d'Orientation, de Coordination et de Suivi des Activités de Développement</i>
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
DC	Dubai Cares
DRACP	Dirección Regional de l'Assainissement, Pollution et Nuisance
GASS	Groupe d'Animation et d'Action du Sahel
GDE	Gouvernement Des Enfants
GOLDE	Organisation de la Gouvernance Locale pour le Développement Equitable
HFP	Hard Focal Point
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International NGO
LNGO	Local NGO
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
ME&L	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MELU	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit
PDESC	Social and Economic Development Plan
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
QAQC	Quality Assurance and Quality Control
SC	Steering Committee
SFP	Soft Focal Point
SPPWIS	National Strategic Plan for the Promotion of WASH-in-Schools
STC	Save the Children
UNICEF	United Nations Childs Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Health promotion

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This mid-term evaluation assesses the current progress of the Dubai Cares WASH in Schools program in Mali. The evaluation team traveled to Mali in March and April to meet with all five implementing partners, government officials, local NGO partners, school representatives and private sector construction firms.

KEY FINDINGS

The role the DC program has played in sustaining the partnership throughout the crises cannot be overstated. As many donors withdrew, several members of the partnership may not have been able to continue to maintain their overhead costs. For example, STC recently received a cancellation notice from USAID of its \$22 million education grant, the organization's largest program in Mali. In this sense, the DC program has remained extremely relevant in sustaining the operations of its partners, without which the humanitarian response will no doubt have been less effective. But it is now up to the partners and the SC to ensure that the development space remains open by not over extending their operations into the humanitarian one.

Comparisons across the partnership have yielded some interesting findings and insights into the efficiencies of each partner's implementation approach, theories of change, stakeholder relations, M&E systems and effectiveness. In regards to implementation approach, the evaluation team found a wide spectrum ranging from direct implementation to high levels of outsourcing activities to local and international NGOs

One finding is that the most common approach – outsourcing to LNGOs with additional capacity building activities – is fraught with challenges in terms of monitoring and effectiveness. One of the primary reasons for this appears to be that transferring best practices to LNGOs through capacity building is more difficult than most partners expect. Thus, we found many of the partners working to build capacity with LNGOs with whom they've already worked. Although alternative partners may not exist, DC Wash in Schools partners would do well to avoid the “bottomless pit” of capacity building by adopting international best practice approaches.

At the other end of the spectrum, the direct implementation approach promises to eliminate some of the capacity issues associated with LNGOs and improves monitoring quality, but the evaluation team found that this tends to come at the cost of implementation speed. Crucially, direct implementation approaches require very robust management and delegation systems to be effective, which may be an appropriate mid-course correction for DC direct implementation partners to take.

Towards the middle of the spectrum, we find the *faire-faire* approach in which the *Comité de Gestion Scolaire* (CGS) is directly empowered to achieve WASH goals. Here, LNGOs play a more ancillary role and thus it is easier to prescreen qualified LNGOs to perform a narrower set of activities, such as monitoring. Building LNGO capacity is not as necessary, allowing the partner to dedicate more time and resources to working directly with the CGS. As such, the evaluation team found that *faire-faire* approach partners may have found a more optimal mix of internalizing and externalizing implementation costs.

The picture regarding local government involvement is also very mixed, and the evaluation team found few positive signs that the *Centre d'Animation Pédagogique* (CAP) and Commune staff could eventually take the lead in sustaining WASH services. CAP staff appear to be the weakest, and the evaluation team found no evidence that training these individuals as trainers had any meaningful effect on the WASH programs in the schools. Commune staff in the Directorate of Water, however, do seem to be more qualified to play a stronger role in water management and maintenance, although their ability to conduct effective preliminary hydrology studies appears to be limited. Underlying all sections of local government, we find a set of perverse incentives in which the partners, to some extent in competition with other programs, must pay for government staff to do their jobs. Such findings suggest that the partnership limit the role of local government. Nevertheless, the evaluation team found that there are limits to limiting, as local government officials can also be uncooperative and even delay implementation.

Also, within the varying approaches to program implementation, the evaluation team found varying theories of change, especially in regards to who will be the change agent to produce behavior change. Preliminary results from the verification survey suggest that empowering mothers as stakeholders in the CGS, revenue raisers, latrine monitors and behavior change agents may be more effective than the various child-to-child approaches. However, these conclusions are based upon a very under representative verification survey, validating only that further inquiry is necessary.

The partnership also includes partners who embrace two different approaches to behavior change reinforcement: CLTS and PHAST. The debate between these two methods travels across Asia and Africa, but cannot be resolved here. Nevertheless, DC and the partnership does have to opportunity to track their different outcomes under the current MELU framework.

In regards to infrastructure, one overwhelming finding across the partnership and in consultation with school representatives on site visits is that the design of the double pit latrine, although not easily grasped by all construction firms at first, is high quality and very well thought out. DC would do well to incorporate this design into its “institutional library” and disseminate it to comparable programs outside Mali.

In regards to the actual implementation of infrastructure, the partnership as a whole appears to build decent latrines, struggle with effective water points, but provide adequate hand washing stations. The evaluation team found those partners who rely upon third party infrastructure monitoring firms tend to perform better, and those who involve the monitoring firm earlier in the procurement process (i.e. Oxfam) perform the strongest, both in terms of latrine quality and water pump quality. Finally, the contractual guarantees built into these arrangements seem to have the necessary teeth to ensure that construction firms correct their work if needed.

The evaluation team also found varying levels of process and documentation. Superficial levels of documentation, complemented by strong informal mechanisms, may be a commonsense approach taken by most INGOs when dealing with difficult donors, such as bilaterals. Yet one advantage of the DC partnership is its emphasis on learning. As such, lackadaisical and misrepresentative documentation denies an organization the opportunity to identify systematic improvements to their processes in ways that foster organizational learning. On the other hand, we found certain partners possessed exceptionally strong processes in response to their large portfolios, yet in practice they lacked the staffing to be able to effectively put these systems into practice. Indeed, human resource issues and varying turnover rates goes a long way in explaining the partner variation we found.

In regards to partner ME&L systems, the evaluation team found a strong tendency across the partnership to tick the box and produce formal reports that lacked useful information. Nor did we find clear guidance on how issues were addressed if they did manage to make it into M&E reports. Again, this is a common practice and an understandable solution to inflexible donors, but this does come at the cost of institutional learning, as solutions rests within the personal relations of the individual. In general, with some notable exceptions, the partners' M&E systems were geared more towards reporting functions than to tracking behavior change. This is of course partially due to the fact that an Emory field team has been dispatched to measure outcomes and impacts separately.

The SC and MELU structure has generated a very resilient and collegial relationship within the consortium; it is an exemplar of true partnership cooperation. The SC/MELU structure is optimized in that Country Directors provide the “top cover” and authority to lower level staff to work together and work out the details. The evaluation team found several examples of how this structure is facilitating learning that is greater than the sum of its parts. However, there may be many individual and unique elements that make replication of this model difficult, esp. in a Prime/Sub relationship. Moreover, learning integration has probably reached its limits, and is unlikely to lead to substantial organizational change.

The evaluation team found incredibly high levels of information sharing, joint tool development, shared communications, coordination, and commitment to learning; but significantly fewer examples of these learnings actually being applied across the program. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense of “mission awareness” across the partnership and silo effects have been effectively neutralized. Other programs, and even donors, in Mali have also borrowed various aspects of the DC model. Surprisingly (and unfortunately), the majority of partner's HQs are not as enthusiastic about the program, and each partner's ability to “infect” its HQ depends more on the HQ's learning systems than the innovations of this program.

The Emory field monitoring team is a wonderful innovation that can provide independent and useful information for the Partners, including the potential for “implementation quality” indicators. The Emory Unit is also able to collect additional information and has the capacity to launch conduct sound sub studies. Yet the evaluation team was disappointed that the STC's hand washing study was not read, and some CDs had forgotten about it, and that the dehydration study, despite its strong design, appears of little use. Finally, there appears to be somewhat of a conceptual gap between the goals of Emory and the goals of the program. On the one hand, partner M&E teams are looking to Emory to play a stronger role in capturing behavior change. On the other hand, additional program supplements, such as deworming activities, may threaten the ability of Emory to test the WASH in Schools hypothesis.

The partnership faces an interesting opportunity to elevate its profile to the national level and develop an effective advocacy strategy to put WASH in Schools back on the agenda. While there are risks, a multi-scenario strategy is nevertheless worth the extra effort. Important questions to consider would be the partnership's ability to shift focus to building the capacity of the teacher training centers this late in the program; how the impact evaluation (should it be positive) can be used as an evidence based advocacy piece; how to communicate the program's relatively high unit costs (e.g. \$22,000 per school); how to leverage the interest of GPE; and what level of government commitment would convince stakeholders that it was serious about WASH in schools.

INTRODUCTION

The Dubai Cares WASH-in-Schools program for Mali focuses on the provision of effective facilities, sustainable hygiene education, governance (planning and review by stakeholders) as well as Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for continuous improvement based on lessons learned. Since December 2009, the four-year program has worked in the Bamako, Mopti, Sikasso, Koulikoro, Timbuktu, and Gao regions of Mali. It is implemented through a Partnership of five agencies (UNICEF, Save the Children, CARE, OXFAM GB and WATERAID), who deliver the following five items that are referred to as “the full package”:

1. Provide basic sanitation and environmental facilities to ensure a healthy and adequate learning environment, notably by enabling school children and staff to access appropriate and clean toilets.
2. Provide water and ensure soap provision for hand washing at critical times, i.e. after going to the toilet and before handling food.
3. Provide safe drinking water from a protected groundwater source (spring, well or borehole), or from a treated supply, and keep it safe until it is drunk.
4. Hygiene promotion and communication for development to enhance children's knowledge of the importance of hygiene and a clean school environment and to promote behavior change for the adoption of safe hygiene practices.
5. School Management, Operation & Maintenance as well as Evaluation & Monitoring frameworks so that optimal conditions for the long term can be achieved in a sustainable way.

While the implementation of the program has been managed directly by individual Partnership members, the Partnerships Steering Committee (SC) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit (MELU) ensure efficient and effective interagency learning and knowledge sharing as well as evidence based monitoring of strategic impact of WASH in schools. The Partnership has defined the common framework of interventions for the WASH-in-Schools Initiative by agreeing on the following:

1. a common goal, specific objectives and related indicators,
2. common standards for main achievements and
3. the scale of the initiative and the geographical allocation between organizations.

A partner Steering Committee is the primary interlocutor on behalf of the Partnership for the relevant government agencies and interested donors. The SC is composed of one senior representative of each of the five Partnership members (CARE International – Oxfam UK - Save the Children US – UNICEF – WaterAid) including also a senior representative from DC, and makes decisions by consensus among all Partnership members. The ISC meets at least quarterly to review progress, and is chaired by one Partnership member on a rotational basis.

The Partnership has established a MELU in charge of the capitalization of lessons learnt and best practices for replication and scale up. The MELU reports to the SC on a bimonthly basis in order to keep the members informed about the ongoing learning activities, to disseminate results of specific studies and to initiate timely action by the SC and/or one of the members of the Partnership

especially with regards to potential leverage points and scale up opportunities with other organizations and agencies.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

This mid-term evaluation assesses the current progress of program activities and coordination mechanisms in order to identify strengthening opportunities for the remainder of the program. This mid-term evaluation comes after 2 years of program implementation.

Driving questions for the evaluation are guided by the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability) as depicted below:

Criteria	Questions
Relevance	What is the present level of relevance of the project given the changing environment in Mali?
Efficiency	How well is the availability/usage of means/inputs managed? How well is the implementation of activities managed? How well are outputs achieved?
Effectiveness	How well is the project achieving its planned results in hardware, software, governance and advocacy? How effective is the institutional structure, supported by the Steering Committee and MELU, in: a) contributing to institutional and management capacity? b) leveraging MEL for integrated learning? c) sustaining the program?
Impact	Not Applicable
Sustainability	What is the level of ownership of the project by target groups and will it continue after the end of external support? What is the level of policy support provided and the degree of interaction between project and policy level? What is the level of interest in the program by in-country donors?

This evaluation is guided by the principles of “utilization focused evaluations” (UFE), which requires that the primary intended users of the evaluation must be clearly identified and personally engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process to ensure that their primary intended uses can be identified.¹ As such, the evaluation team used the OECD questions as guide posts to direct their inquiries, but the actual wording of the questions they address was adjusted to better reflect the realities of the program.

¹ See Patton, M.Q. 1997. Utilization-focused Evaluation: The New Century Text. Sage Publications Inc., California.

METHODOLOGY

Three consultants from SoCha,llc were deployed to Mali to conduct four weeks of interviews from March to April.² During this time, the team visited all partner offices, with an average of 7 workdays dedicated to each partner, conducted over 100 interviews, reviewed more than 150 documents, and visited 22 schools. The consultants also attended the presentation of Emory's hydration study, and met with individually with the Emory Field Verification team about their monitoring findings. Finally, all five members of the Steering Committee, several government representatives and the UNICEF Head of Mission were also interviewed.

In terms of an analytical framework, the evaluation team approached the Mid-term review with a pre-conceived mental map of how the dynamics of the development industry are driven more by the imperatives of implementation than by the imperatives of effectiveness. Specifically, the evaluation team formulated the follow hypotheses:

- Partnerships seldom work because partners compete with each other
- Partners are more concerned with implementation than results, and M&E is little more than a reporting mechanism that relies heavily upon spin.
- Partners have no incentive to change their organizations and therefore are unlikely to learn.
- Because they can't learn, partners do not how to produce positive social change

With this “null hypothesis” in mind, the evaluation team then sought out evidence to disprove it with a second proposition: that the DC's Steering Committee and MELU design, the programs integrated package, and choice of implementing partners will mitigate and to some extent overcome these issues. The analytical approach was then defined in terms of pitting these two competing views of the project against each other to obtain a richer analysis.

² The consultants were Carroll Patterson, PhD (Johns Hopkins); Pierre Fallivier, PhD (MIT); and Morwari Zafar, ABD (Oxford).

RELEVANCE

This section explores the program's current relevance in Mali by answering the following question of the ToR:

What is the present level of relevance of the program in Mali?

In regards to the program's relevance, the evaluation team did not explore if the program's design was relevant for the needs of Mali or if the WASH in Schools approach is the best way to improve school attendance. DC has engaged other services providers to answer these questions (e.g. the Emory study). Instead, here the question of relevance deals with how the changes since the Coup and the rebel push have affected the program and the partnership. Since the coup in March 2012, Mali has experienced a series of food security, government legitimacy and hostile invasion crises. These "triple crises" have in turn led to a suspension of funding by most external donor organizations. DC remains the prominent exception, even though Oxfam and CARE were forced to curtail their operations in 112 schools in Timbuktu and parts of Mopti, and reallocate the remaining resources to other locations. However, although roughly 90% of DC schools were not directly impacted by the Northern incursion, the triple crises still hold implications for the relevance of their programs, which the evaluation team set out to explore.

WHAT IS THE PRESENT LEVEL OF RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM IN MALI?

Since DC approved Oxfam and CARE's request to re-orient their operations away from Northern Mali, neither organization has been able to return to their areas and monitor the status of their previous work. Oxfam has continued to assess the security situation with and through their implementation partner Tassaght, as well as maintained daily contact with local key informants. From April to July of 2012, most schools in Gao were closed and the villages evacuated. In September, local community teachers began to teach informally, sometimes in the school, sometimes in their homes. Key informants report that school still made use of the hard facilities, and used hygiene kits to help with basic needs. During the time of the evaluation, Oxfam still considered the conditions in select parts of Gao too unstable to continue, which would prevent the program from achieving its expected results. However, Oxfam also participates in the education cluster of the humanitarian response group, and has used the facilities and services it provided to these communities as a spring board for food security support.

Oxfam is currently undergoing a major push to meet the demands of the growing humanitarian space. Its staff size has almost tripled from 15 to 41 to support the food security crisis and response program, and its operational budgeted has also tripled this year. Oxfam recently opened a new office in Kayes, and have brought in advocacy specialists to support their effort. Many WASH in Schools staff have been pulled into supporting the response, and Oxfam uses the local relations they established during the program as a mechanism for distributing relief.

CARE has had a similar experience, but by contrast has been much more anxious to return to Timbuktu and resume the program's operations. The CARE Country Director indicated that they had a very strong local partner in Timbuktu, while the capacity in the Dogon districts of Gao is reportedly low. Thus, CARE has a much higher chance of achieving their expected results in the North should security permit. Before the evacuation, CARE had completed most of its

infrastructure activities in Timbuktu while the Soft were still ongoing. CARE staff did not have as much information about the status of the facilities, but they were optimistic that the facilities had been maintained. Like Oxfam, many of CARE's WASH in Schools staff have shifted over to the humanitarian space, and allegedly keep a careful eye on how to design a response that remains sensitive to development concerns. During the time of the evaluation, CARE staff were in frequent contact with the military liaison team, and recently sent a security assessment team to Timbuktu to explore re-opening their office. Should this happen, CARE will prioritize the delivery of humanitarian aid, but would most likely welcome the opportunity to discuss resuming its previous WASH activities with DC.

UNICEF has continued to operate in the North through a separate rural water point program and has not been forced to adjust the scope. However, their ability to continue is unique, as they subcontract their infrastructure activities to a Tuareg group that can allegedly move freely throughout the North. The program also does not provide a Soft package on the scale of the DC one. Although this has garnered some media resentment in Bamako against the organization, UNICEF staff have been able to continue to provide essential water services and access throughout the conflict. One additional factor that has kept the water point program operation is the ongoing outbreak of Cholera. Northern Mali typically goes through a three-year cycle of Cholera prevalence, and last year was hoped to be the peak. Thus, the UNICEF's activities in Timbuktu heavily involved raising Cholera awareness and prevention, in addition to its water point and humanitarian response.

Even though STC and WaterAid have been the least effected, the triple crises have still led to a dramatic shift away from the development space to the humanitarian space. In practice, this has resulted in higher turnover, with a much younger crowd who is less experienced and committed to Mali, as the new majority. STC has lost eight expat staff since the crises began, and the Country Director will soon also resign. STC recently also received a cancellation notice from USAID of its \$22 million education grant, the organization's largest program in Mali. The triple crises have stretched all members of the partnership, save perhaps WaterAid (who is not as involved in the humanitarian response) to the limit. Rising costs, disrupted supply chains, increasing levels of mistrust and shortened time horizons have also affected members of the partnership, although unevenly. Surprisingly, the partners indicated that influxes of IDPs were not really an issue but this could be due to the partners' general reluctance to the suggestion that their current scope is too large.

The major issue all partners now face is how to transition back to the development space in the face of uncertainty. This transition can only happen if projects within that space are still maintained. In this context, all partners asked the evaluation team about DC's next steps for Mali after the program. They expressed gratitude that DC has continued to fund the program, but they must also deal with a strong temptation to shift more resources to influencing the response sector, which is increasing in size and funds. As such, the time for explaining to the partners what comes next is approaching, and pressure to close the develop space will increase. DC should consider revisiting the Mali Strategy looking past the end of the program.

CONCLUSION

The role the DC program has played in sustaining the partnership throughout the crises cannot be overstated. As many donors withdrew, several members of the partnership may not have been able to continue to maintain their overhead costs. In this sense, the DC program has remained extremely

relevant in sustaining the operations of its partners, without which the humanitarian response will no doubt have been less effective. But it is now up to the partners and the SC to ensure that the development space remains open by not over extending their operations into the humanitarian one.

EFFICIENCY

This section addresses the following questions of the TOR:

- How well is the availability/usage of means/inputs managed?
- How well is the implementation of activities managed?
- How well are outputs achieved?

The evaluation team reformulated the questions according to Hard, Soft and ME&L functions across the partnership, and the format for this section is as follows:

- How well has the implementation of Hard activities being managed and monitored?
- How well has the implementation of Soft activities being managed and monitored?
- How well does the Partner's ME&L system support these activities?

Each partner is examined separately, but references and comparisons to other partner approaches are included to highlight findings and points. The evaluation team identified various approaches, e.g. capacity building, *faire-faire*, direct implementation and various combinations therein, which are illustrated through a series of process maps. These approaches are then juxtaposed with the performance of each partner to date (taken from the MELU Dashboard) and the findings of the Emory verification survey. Note that although the verification survey does not adequately represent the range of interventions across the program, the findings are more than just anecdotal. The surveyed schools do in fact provide an adequate snapshot of the various implementation outcomes that have occurred. This section ends with some preliminary statements about the effectiveness of each approach, and concludes with a series of recommendations that flow out of the discussion.

CARE

BACKGROUND, PROGRESS AND CARE'S CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACH

CARE has been implementing programs in Mali since 1979. Since 2002, CARE in Mali has prioritized the building of capacity of local NGOs (LNGOs) and local authorities to carry out service delivery functions across the humanitarian and development sector spectrums. One of CARE's primary objectives has been to support the decentralization of the national government through the devolution of power to the local government and civil society levels. In practice, this means that CARE approaches the question of WASH in schools as a question of local governance in education. Yet CARE has recognized that working through these various organizations requires significant investment in capacity building, and the organization provides a series of trainings in finance management, program management, monitoring and evaluation, etc. to fill this gap. Although CARE ostensibly works with both, over 95% of CARE's activities are currently implemented through LNGOs. CARE has worked in both Timbuktu and the Dogon areas for the past ten years.

CARE's capacity building approach was described by staff as a "cascading method" of empowerment, by training those (Communes and LNGOs) who train and monitor others. At first glance, it appears that LNGOs implement the soft components of WASH education and encourage behavior change in schools, while the Communes are the contracting authorities for the infrastructure activities, implemented by private firms. Yet in practice, the LNGOs play a much stronger role than the Communes, especially as the program has progressed. Through this approach, CARE trains and tasks LNGOs to in turn train local governance bodies, including Communes, CGS, AME, APE, and village committees, on WASH and CLTS; as well as train elected officials and technical advisers in CAPs and Communes to develop school and WASH related proposals. CARE also directly trains the academic advisers of the CAPs, who then train teachers on WASH as part of their qualification and certification processes.

Progress to date: In a relative comparison with those of the other partners, CARE's implementation progress sits midway in the pack, with 68% of its total work plan completed during the time of the evaluation. Specifically, CARE had completed the construction of 33 (50%) latrines, 44 (40%) water points, and 120 (71%) hygiene kits; as well as completed soft training in 147 (86%) of its total 170 schools. Prior to closing the Timbuktu office, CARE had completed 41 water points (59% of target for the whole project), and 25 latrines (36% of target) in the 70 schools of Timbuktu. Compared to the other partners, CARE tends to lag behind in terms of IEC and water point construction (4th place in both) and sits in the middle in terms of hygiene kit and latrine construction (3rd place in both). CARE is currently last when it comes to its own self-reported percentage of schools that meet WASH standards (21%).

Results of the Verification Survey: Overall, the verification survey found that CARE sits just below the 13% partnership average with only 10% of its sampled completed schools that meet WASH standards (in contrast to the self-reported figures above).³ In terms of improved Water Access, CARE also lags behind, which only 30% of its schools possessing a functional improved water point, up only 8.8% from its baseline figure of 21.2%. Considering that CARE has already reported the completion of 44 water points, we have strong reason to suspect that some of the schools have failed water points after the implementation was completed (and are not awaiting a future water point installation). The survey also found that many CARE latrines failed to meet the program's norms, and close to 40% of surveyed CARE latrines were "not safe." Latrine installation did not lead to behavior change, and the survey found only a slight increase in the number of defecation free schools (up to 40% from the 34.9% baseline, the lowest marginal and absolute increase in the partnership). The survey found that CARE had the lowest percentage of schools that met hand washing norms (30%), due mainly to a lack of soap (70% of CARE schools). Finally, on a more positive note,

³ Data on the norms consisted of four indicators that determine whether a school meets WASH standards: 1) functional, improved water point, 2) separated latrines in good condition, 3) hand washing facilities, 4) hygiene kit, including soap, kettles, brooms, and detergent or bleach.

CARE's Wash Management ranking was overall in the middle of the partnership, with its schools finishing first in terms of holding regular CGS meetings.

HOW WELL HAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HARD ACTIVITIES BEEN MANAGED AND MONITORED?

CARE supports the implementation of *Decree 02-313* of June 4, 2002, which details the responsibilities of local authorities in terms of education.⁴ Officially, Communes are responsible for equipping schools with water points and sanitation facilities. They are supposed to lead all related activities including determining the relevance of specific facilities and their location, designing the work, raising the necessary funds, managing and controlling construction, and organizing operations and management of the facilities. According to our discussions with CARE and its partners however, Communes are mainly on their own to find the technical, human, and financial support needed to undertake this. To fill this gap, CARE chose to work with and through the local Directorates at the Communes as a means of building their capacity to design, procure and manage WASH infrastructure. The training also covers issues of project planning and fund-raising, as the Communes will have to raise funds as part of the project (10% of co-funding).

At the outset of the program, CARE chose to work in those Communes in which the organization had prior experience. Referring to this method as "Communes of convergence," CARE staff justified this approach in terms of the potential for past and current activities to converge and create synergies. In Timbuktu, until the end of 2012, CARE's GOLDE project was designed to prepare school development initiatives under the auspices of the Communes. In Mopti, the DEGE girls' empowerment project is currently using a similar process. It is also important to note that CARE is implementing the DC program in Communes where it was conducting other education and local governance projects. As such, we find substantial overlap of CARE's WASH in Schools program with those of other programs.

Because CARE's approach to working through local government is so unique to the partnership, we provide a more detailed description of how CARE implements infrastructure activities, as relayed by the organization's HFP. The process of delivering WASH infrastructure is broken into the following steps, some of which happen alongside soft activities:

Preparation of a school development plan and specific project. The LNGO partner is tasked with working with the CGS, students, parents' or mothers' associations (APE or AME, created as part of the soft component) and village chiefs to prepare school development plans and projects. Note, however, that not all projects focus on WASH issues, and the plan speaks to a wider array of interventions such as new classrooms. Thus, improvements to infrastructure arise as a subset of a larger plan produced by CARE LNGOs and the CGS.

Initial selection of WASH activities. The LNGO presents the plans to CARE, and proposes a selection of activities the DC initiative can support (i.e., that require WASH).

Validation of activities by the Commune. The LNGO partner and CARE propose their selection to the Commune's *Local Committee for the Planning, Coordination and Monitoring of Development Actions* (CLOCSAD). The selected projects are included in the Commune's 5-year *Social and Economic Development Plan* (PDESC).

Finalization of project documents. The LNGO partner then works with the CGS and the Commune to prepare a proposal for each project to be funded. The Commune formally sends the proposal to CARE for funding. Note: initially, the Commune's technical services were in charge of preparing the technical studies

⁴ The Decree states that (i) Communes are in charge of the construction, equipment, and maintenance of first cycle fundamental schools (years 1-6) and literacy centers; (ii) Circles are responsible for the construction, equipment, and management of second cycle fundamental schools (years 7-9); and Regions (and Bamako District) are to build, equip, and manage secondary schools (years 10-12).

(e.g., hydrological surveys) needed to install the water points, but they often lacked the technical capacity. CARE now hires a consulting firm conduct these studies.

Preparation and processing of the co-funding agreement: Once it approves a proposal, CARE prepares a co-funding contract in which it agrees to cover 90% of the cost and the Commune 10%. The agreement states that the Commune monitors project implementation. Commune contributions are derived through a tax paid by the village where the school is located, and CARE's contribution to the Commune is actually channeled through the national government.

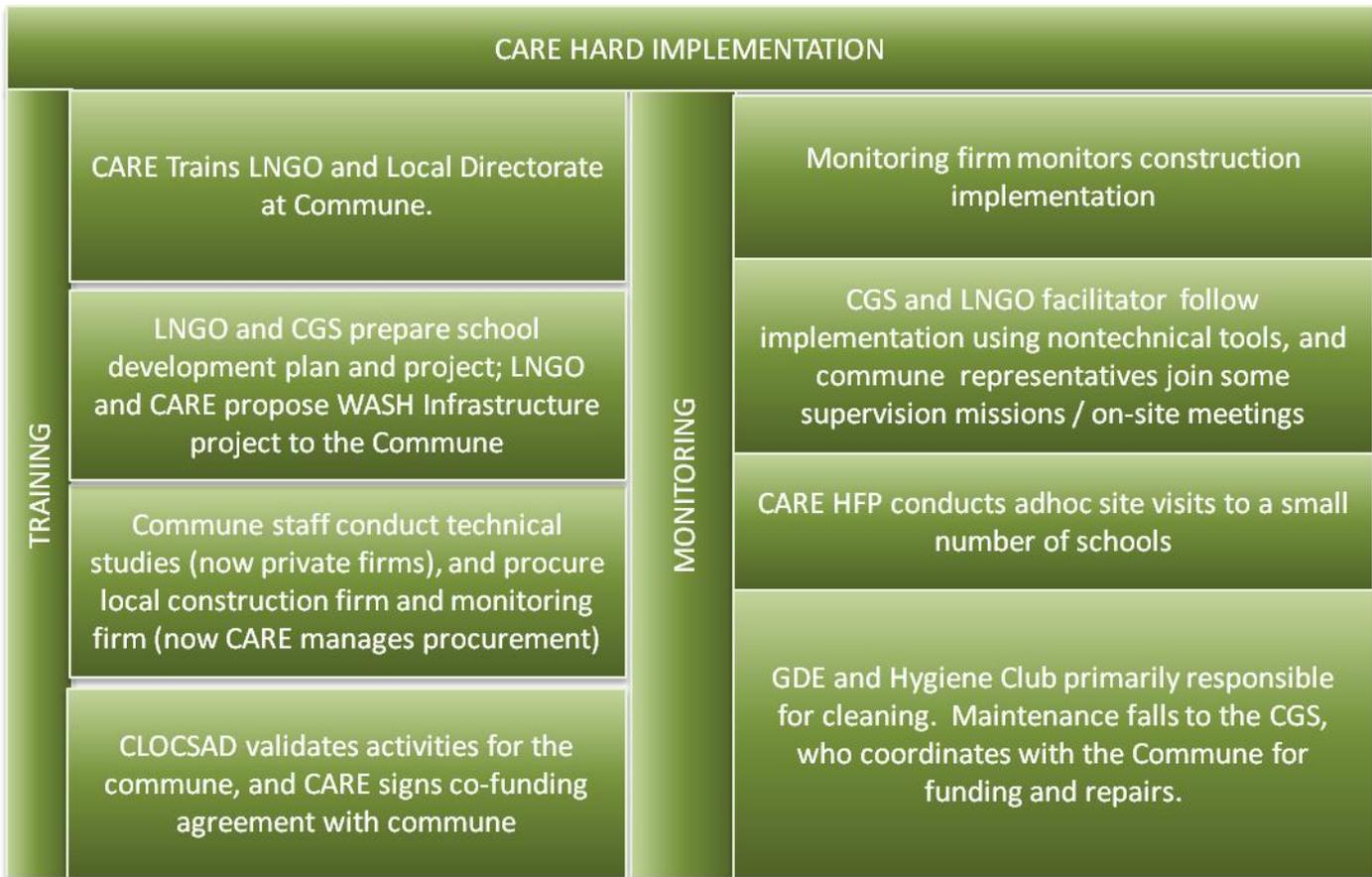
Tendering: With technical support from the LNGO, the Commune recruits private construction companies to build the water points and latrines as well as recruits a construction monitoring firm.

Construction, supervision and quality control: Reporting to the Commune, the consulting firm monitors delivery and controls quality. The CGS and LNGO facilitator are also supposed to monitor implementation, and elected representatives and technical agents from the Commune join on some supervision missions and take part in on-site meetings.

Reception of the works: A Commune representative conducts the final infrastructure inspection in the presence of CARE, the LNGO, the building company, and the monitoring firm. If construction is satisfactory, the Commune hands temporary ownership over to the CGS, and full ownership one year later, provided the infrastructure operates properly and remains free of defects. Final payments are then paid to the construction and supervision firms.

Use and maintenance: After completion, (i) the LNGO monitors how the CGS implements the maintenance plan through checklists, (ii) in urban areas, Commune's oftentimes must pay for water supply from the public network, (iii) while the CGS is supposed to manage access from other users (e.g., villagers allowed to use the water point), ensure cleaning and maintenance (by pupils and their mothers), and report to the village on the conditions and use of the facilities, (iv) the village council is also supposed to monitor the use of the facilities and inform the Commune on the management of the school; and (v) the pupils are supposed to ensure the proper use, cleaning, and maintenance of the facilities.

CARE's approach to infrastructure implementation faces a number of significant challenges, many of which do not have easy solutions. By delegating the management of infrastructure implementation to the Communes, CARE reported that they discovered a profound lack of technical capacity of Commune staff to manage and evaluate hydrological studies for water point construction, which delayed implementation significantly (up to eight months). CARE also reported a similar lack of capacity in the Commune's ability to technically review construction company bids and provide meaningful monitoring. Finally, CARE was unsure about the effectiveness of CAP training on teachers, as the former did not share the results of the training programs with CARE and CARE lacked to political capital to push back. The overall result was to not only compromise implementation, but, if the initial verification surveys are to be considered, also effectiveness.



These problems probably could have been easily avoided with some preliminary research on local government capacity. Given CARE’s alleged “Communes of convergence” approach (in which they select Communes with whom they’ve previously worked), staff members should have been able to identify these capacity gaps prior to implementation and made realistic, practical decisions regarding whether or not to work with the Communes to develop these skills (a very difficult task), or turn to the private sector (which CARE now does). It is unclear why CARE’s previous experience with local government didn’t point to a private sector solution early on.

Yet CARE is also struggling to come to grips with a deeper problem of delegating the management of program implementation to local government in the context of devolution: The problem of accountability. To be sure, capacity issues do exist at the Commune level, but the overarching problem is that many local officials lack the incentive to provide adequate service delivery to their constituencies. For example, CARE also reported that they suspended payment transfer to the Communes for infrastructure activities because they could no longer guarantee that the funds would not be channeled elsewhere, e.g. to support the security effort. But the problem of incentives runs much deeper than that at the local level. In fact, all partners expressed frustration when seeking to involve local government officials in any monitoring activities, as these individuals often require that the partners pay their per diems and transportation costs. This dynamic has even given rise to competitions among donors and programs for who will pay the highest per diem and travel costs, which undermines incentives to delivery services promoted by lower paying donors/programs. Such perverse incentives are not easily addressed by capacity building activities, and therefore delegating implementation management responsibilities to local government groups that both lack the capacity to do their job and the incentive to do so is problematic.⁵

⁵ Indeed, Devolution in Mali started in 1996 and since then a host of issues regarding local accountability have risen. For example, research in the devolution of Mali’s health sector found that because policies did not address public accountability, they did not

HOW WELL HAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOFT ACTIVITIES BEEN MANAGED AND MONITORED?

As the capacity building approach suggests, CARE has attempted to build the capacity of the LNGOs in WASH, Program Management, Financial Management, and Reporting. In doing so, CARE provided one week trainings on each topic. CARE's SFP who ran these sessions also mentioned that he later regularly provided refresher trainings during his monthly visits to the field, although he could not provide evidence that these trainings occurred. CARE has also trained LNGOs on the use of the DC hard and soft tools, developed jointly by the MELU and the HFP/SFPs. Although staff members could not provide a clear capacity building plan with intermittent, achievable progress markers, CARE staff believed that over time, most LNGOs improved the management of their operations as well as their financial and narrative reporting skills. Once their training is complete, LNGO facilitators are supposed to fill out a checklist on progress and on the use of facilities. These are then to be used during monthly meetings between CARE, the LNGO, the construction firms, the consulting firm, and Communes' technical teams to review the implementation process and actions to undertake.

LNGOs were selected for their local knowledge and connections to the villages in which CARE wished to work. By operating through LNGOs in Communes where CARE and its implementing partners already worked, CARE argues that the WASH in Schools program will gain stronger acceptance by communities and authorities. Combined with the training of a range of local actors in the schools, villages, Communes, and CAPs, LNGOs will be able to allegedly build in reinforcing mechanisms to promote the widespread adoption of the WASH practices the initiative supports. In Timbuktu, CARE operated through a consortium of three local partners (AMSS, ARDIL and CAID), and in Mopti it works through GASS.⁶ These LNGOs were chosen because of their experience working with local communities and their prior positive experience working with CARE. Not all had experience with WASH, but they did undergo an assessment in which capacity gaps were identified. In addition to the standard 11 soft activities found throughout the partnership, CARE has added eight additional Soft activities, most of which reflect CARE's approach to working with local government (steps 3-7) and embrace of CLTS (steps 15-17).

fundamentally change human resource management, quality and equity of staffing. See "Devolution and human resources in primary healthcare in rural Mali" by Elsbet Lodenstein and Dramane Dao, *Human Resources for Health* 2011, 9:15. Found at <http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/9/1/15> and accessed on April 4, 2013.

⁶ AMSS: *Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sabel*; ARDIL: *Action Recherche pour le Développement d'Initiatives Locales*; CAID: *Cellule de Soutien des Initiatives de Développement*; GASS: *Groupe d'Animation et d'Action du Sabel*.

CARE SOFT IMPLEMENTATION			
TRAINING	CARE selects LNGO partner, provides Soft Training, provides additional capacity Building	MONITORING	LNGO activates CGS, provides training on WASH management, education, raising revenues and maintenance; creates CGS WASH budgets and monitors spending; aids with tax collection for WASH activities
	LNGO is WASH focal point for schools.		LNGO forms and trains GDEs and Hygiene clubs.; creates women's groups and trains them on revenue generating activities
	CARE directly trains CAP staff, CAP Trained Teachers take performance test, but info not shared with CARE, who has limited oversight capabilities		LNGO activates and trains community on CLTS
	CARE ME&L Officer conducts limited site visits to a small number of schools, using informal spot checks		Throughout, LNGO monitors itself and CGS, GDEs, Commune Staff, CAP
	CAP and LNGO staff trainers train schoolteachers in WASH		
	CAP randomly monitors teachers, but does not share information with LNGO or CARE		

Since wave one, CARE has shifted implementation management away from the Communes and towards the LNGOs, as the former lacked the capacity. But the LNGO fix appears to be generating a new set of problems. LNGOs now face an enormous set of tasks related to the implementation of the WASH in Schools program, that range from capacity building across the stakeholder spectrum, to implementing the soft, to monitoring maintenance and behavior change, to financial management. Based on interviews with CARE staff, we compiled a partial list of LNGO areas of responsibilities:

Revitalize old or create new CGS structures; Provide training to school management, prepare development works plans and proposals, assist with raising funds to run the school, as well as foster local participatory planning; Train local stakeholders in monitoring the quality of infrastructure construction implementation; Create women's groups and train women artisans; Ensure taxes are used efficiently and transparently; Build the capacity of local officials in CAPS and Communes, as well as in the CGS, AMEs, APEs and Village Councils, on WASH and CLTS.

Given that LNGO facilitators are responsible for an average of 15 schools each, which s/he visits on average once per month, it is very unrealistic to expect that LNGOs can effectively provide all these services as well as monitor their outcome, especially when one considers that the LNGO partner required significant capacity building from CARE at the beginning of the program. At best, LNGOs can be expected to provide a "light touch" approach to monitoring implementation satisfaction and one-off trainings using pre-established modules, but it is unlikely to expect they can produce quality work and verify behavior change when spread so thin over such a wide scope of work.

Underlying both the Commune and LNGO partnership is the fundamental assumption that CARE has the capacity and know-how to effectively build the capacity of each partner enough for them to carry on as implementers and monitors. The evaluation team examined this assumption. On the one hand, the evaluation team was very impressed by the quality of one-week training materials CARE used to train LNGOs and Commune staff. On the other hand, CARE does not appear to follow international capacity building best practice, involving a rigorous initial assessment; a clear, achievable capacity building plan, divided up into discrete and measurable steps; and a clear definition of success with a clear exit strategy.⁷ Instead, CARE's approach resembles the more common "bottomless pit" of training activities,⁸ in which the same trainings are applied to the same deficiencies time and time again, with little attempt to understand:

1. If the participants learned the training (as even the most comprehensive training materials can fail if improperly delivered);
2. If the beneficiaries are likely to stay in their current position or keep their current focus (as local government turnover is high and LNGOs tend to shift their sector focus as donor priorities shift); and
3. If the behaviors/practices the capacity builder is seeking to change are in line or run counter to the incentive structure of beneficiary (which is not always be the case).

Indeed, the fact that CARE has worked with the same and/or similar Dogon partners for the past ten years does raise the question if success is achievable and, if so, what would it look like.

In fairness, the word capacity building is often bandied about throughout the industry to refer to any number of interactions with local partners, and CARE is more or less following the norm. Nevertheless, DC may wish to consider imposing additional requirements on its partners when incorporating capacity building aspects of LNGOs into its programs. Oftentimes capacity building efforts fall outside the scope of the program's goals, and may not be necessary for the program to achieve its expected results. At minimum, LINGOs need to present a clear map of what the current capacity gaps are, why and how those gaps need to be filled in order to complete the program goals, and a clear plan for doing so with a clearly defined timeline and exit strategy. Alternatively, DC may wish to require that their implementing partners embrace LINGOs as "service delivery" partners, which are prescreened according to their ability to provide services, and eliminated if they lack the capacity to deliver.

HOW WELL DOES THE PARTNER'S ME&L SYSTEM SUPPORT THESE ACTIVITIES?

In addition to her/his training and other activities, the LNGO school facilitator also provides ongoing monitoring of the activities s/he implements. On average, each LNGO school facilitator is in charge of 15 schools, and can visit each once per month. During the visits, facilitators use the MELU detailed monitoring checklist guide for school visits, which mainly relates to the soft components. The guide is also used by the CARE officers during their field visits.

LNGOs work under the coordination of CARE's Education Program Manager who—on a part-time basis—is tasked with overseeing implementation, writing reports, linking WASH in Schools activities to other education work within CARE and managing relations with other consortium partners. Further staff support comes from one advisor and focal point for infrastructure (hard) activities, one for WASH and education (soft) activities, and one for governance (who was recently re-assigned part-time to respond to crises-related needs), and part-time support from the ME&L Officer.

⁷ For further guidance, see, for example, Ubels, Jan; Acquaye-Baddoo, Naa-Aku; Fowler, Alan (2010). "18". *Capacity Development in Practice*. http://www.snvworld.org/sites/www.snvworld.org/files/publications/capacity_development_in_practice_-_complete_publication.pdf Accessed on 5 June 2012.

⁸ The reference to capacity building as a bottomless pit was recently made during an interview by Dr. Balakrishna Pisupati, formerly of UNEP. See <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/building-and-retaining-capacity-toughest-challenge> for transcripts from his interview.

According to the CARE M&E Officer, his main functions are to follow the progress of hard and soft activities by monitoring local partners' work, and to collect data for coordination, reporting, learning and impact evaluation. In practice, his primary responsibility is to populate the dashboard database that gives regularly updated snapshots of progress. According to him, he spends 80% of his time on the project (itself a half-time involvement) in the field. He indicated that he relies upon a participatory monitoring system for communities to check the quality of the hardware installed and its maintenance.

Additional oversight comes from CAP supervisors, who visit schools on a random basis and fill some of these forms. The construction monitoring firms also add to the ME&L data collection system with regular reports. The ME&L, soft, and hard focal points are scheduled to meet on a monthly basis with their implementing partners to provide advice for programming based on the results of these observations and interactions. Every quarter, the LNGO summarizes the results of the field activities, which they send to CARE. CARE then works with the MELU (the centralized ME&L unit for the DC Initiative) to integrate the indicators of progress in the shared “dashboard” tool that keeps track of the overall program’s advancement.

The CARE ME&L Officer sits atop an interconnected flow of forms and reports that form the backbone of the M&E system. We reviewed these documents and have the following comments:

Documents / data	Source	Use by CARE	Remark
1. Baseline data	ME&L and LNGO	1. Targeting of initial villages, and measuring change	Since the baseline, the ME&L has not measured behavior change, which has been delegated to Emory
2. Reports from facilitator field visits in schools 3. Minutes of monthly coordination meetings with CARE 4. Quarterly reports on progress	LNGO	2. Data only used at field level 3. Coordination and monthly planning of field activities 4. Fills in the ME&L dashboard, helps prepare reports to DC	Potentially rich data from facilitators, but often not recorded systematically. Mainly used for operations, and not analyzed further.
5. Initial technical surveys 6. Observations from daily supervisions 7. Final assessment for each infrastructure project	Technical / Monitoring firm	5., 6., 7. Used by Hard focal points to report on the processes and quality of work, included in reports to DC	Very thorough, document technical as well as procedural issues.
8. Ad hoc field site reports, on monthly meeting with DEGE team, on ME&L meetings and workshop (coordinator, hard, soft, ME&L focal point)	CARE	8. Unclear, but potentially could be used to manage and adapt activities to maintain quality and schedule; although not comprehensive or representative.	ME&L reports capture what was discussed by MELU but there is little evidence to demonstrate it has changed the way CARE operates.

CARE’s ability to gauge the effectiveness of its capacity building efforts directly implicates its M&E system. Yet the evaluation team found two examples in which this system falls short. First, although CARE was able to detect within the first year that its initial capacity building efforts with the Commune were not effective, it did so only after contract staff applied close scrutiny required of a diligent procurement process that these deficiencies emerged (i.e. it was not detected by CARE’s M&E system). Similarly, CARE only discovered

short-falls in its efforts to train LNGO facilitators to collect baseline data for 150 schools after CARE staff members applied close scrutiny of the dataset. CARE staff not only discovered problems with the wording and local translation of some questions (something which should be flagged prior to implementing the survey during pilot testing), but also encountered difficulties entering and cleaning the data even after enumerators were sent back to the village for more interviewing. Effective training, combined with strong M&E oversight, should have identified these problems earlier.

Yet given CARE's limited M&E capacity, it is unlikely that much can change. Recall that the current ME&L officer works only part-time and has 170 schools under his ward. It would be physically impossible for him to provide adequate field monitoring on his own, and therefore his attempts to build a participatory monitoring system - in which stakeholders monitor themselves while he compiles data rather than generates it - is a rational response to an overwhelming problem no one person can solve. Indeed, CARE's M&E officer has taken an approach which is quite common in the NGO world, i.e. building a M&E system that is more focused on tool development and reporting functions than on confirming implementation quality and monitoring behavior change, as there is little incentive to do that latter (esp. because Emory is now doing it), but requires a lot of time and energy; while the former is a clear donor requirement and much easier to accomplish.

While CARE's M&E system lacks the ability to systematic detect issues of implementation quality, failed capacity building and behavior change, we find Emory's verification survey an extremely useful accountability and learning tool. For example, CARE's problem of failed water points does confirm that the ability of the Communes, and perhaps CARE/LNGO staff, to evaluate the hydrology studies is limited. Similarly, given the high number of "not safe" latrines, CARE would also be well-advised to review the systems of its construction monitoring firm. Finally, the unusually high number of schools without soap may suggest a failure of the CGS to find funding. All of these findings reveal that the Emory field unit can potentially play a strong role in improving the quality of the program and its design.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the strength of CARE's approach ostensibly lies in the organization's transfer of knowledge to local partners, who are expected to be empowered to take ownership and bolster the program's sustainability. This is not an easy approach. In contrast to the other partners, CARE has bravely taken on the sticky problem of improving local governance of education in the context of devolution on the one hand, and of rising insecurity in its core area of operations in Timbuktu on the other.

The evaluation team observed a number of tasks CARE performed especially well, including:

- CARE adapted relatively quickly to the declining security situation;
- CARE's one week training modules are very detailed and comprehensive;
- CARE and its partners follow systematic and well-documented procurement procedures for materials, and competitive hiring processes for contractors;
- They further systematically apply all the technical standards jointly developed by the DC initiative;
- CARE applies the partnership best practice of requiring 10% of the contract deposited as guarantees by both construction and monitoring firm, which is only paid a year after reception, provided the work is operating and free of defects;
- A wide gamut of stakeholders are involved in monitoring of activities; and
- CARE was able to make a mid-course correction when the previous approach to the Communes was not working, due in part to low internal capacity of Commune staff and in part to the shifting priorities of the government away from WASH and education and towards security (in which the funds allocated by CARE for WASH in Schools could have been potentially diverted to the military).

Additionally, CARE's requirement that the Commune contribute 10% of the resources for construction and maintenance of WASH infrastructure is in line with conventional wisdom that beneficiary and local

government contributions lead to more sustainable outcomes. Indeed, staff members reported that as a result, villagers were not only paying their taxes but also seeing services provided in return. Finally, although we did not conduct a costings analysis across the partnership, we also assume that CARE's approach yields lower unit costs due to relatively lower levels of core staff involvement.

CARE has developed an implementation approach that emphasizes stakeholder participation and empowerment, and rests upon strong documentation systems. However, its "cascading method" of implementation through LNGOs and Communes does compromise implementation quality and effectiveness across Hard and Soft activities. Moreover, CARE's M&E system lacks the capacity to detect these compromises, and is unable to systematically capture outcomes and behavior changes. Solutions to these challenges are not easy, and most likely entail more direct implementation, an expanded core workforce and more intensive monitoring; all of which place additional burdens on the budget. Alternatively, a more attainable solution may be to scale down the number of schools to more manageable levels, allocate more time to designing clear capacity building plans, and limit capacity building goals to only those that directly support the program.

RECOMMENDATIONSTO CARE

- Given the capacity and accountability issues, CARE may wish to consider redesigning its approach to local government involvement and assume a stronger role in the infrastructure procurement and monitoring process. The new approach should consider ways to increase Commune and CGS accountability, still involve local officials in ceremonial and final sign offs, but not devolve significant decision making power over implementation.
- CARE should consider aligning its approach to capacity building with international best practice. This would involve a clear map of what the current capacity gaps are, why and how those gaps need to be filled in order to complete the program goals, and a clear plan for doing so with a clearly defined timeline and exit strategy. Alternatively, CARE may wish to consider working with LNGOs as "service delivery" partners, which are prescreened according to their ability to provide services, and eliminated if they lack the capacity to deliver.
- Given the large number of target schools, CARE should consider dedicating more fulltime staff to the WASH in Schools project and dedicate more time to monitoring/confirming the implementation quality of its partners. Alternatively, CARE may wish to reduce the size of its school portfolio to more manageable levels.
- CARE should consider using the findings from Emory verification survey as the basis for the improving quality.

OVERALL EFFICIENCY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparisons across the partnership have yielded some interesting findings and insights into the efficiencies of each partner's implementation approach, theories of change, stakeholder relations, M&E systems and effectiveness. In regards to implementation approach, the evaluation team found a wide spectrum ranging from direct implementation to high levels of outsourcing activities to local and international NGOs

One finding is that the most common approach – outsourcing to LNGOs with additional capacity building activities – is fraught with challenges in terms of monitoring and effectiveness. One of the primary reasons for this appears to be that transferring best practices to LNGOs through capacity building is probably much more difficult than most partners expect. Thus, we found many of the partners working to build capacity with LNGOs with whom they've already worked for some years. Although alternative partners may not exist, DC Wash in Schools partners would do well to avoid the “bottomless pit” of capacity building by adopting international best practice approaches.

At the other end of the spectrum, the direct implementation approach promises to eliminate some of the capacity issues associated with LNGOs and improves monitoring quality, but the evaluation team found that this tends to come at the cost of implementation speed. Crucially, direct implementation approaches require very robust management and delegation systems to be effective, which may be an appropriate mid-course correction for DC direct implementation partners to take.

Finally, towards the middle of the spectrum, we find the *faire-faire* approach in which the CGS is directly empowered to achieve WASH goals. Here, LNGOs play a more ancillary role and thus it is easier to prescreen qualified LNGOs to perform a narrower set of activities, such as monitoring. Building LNGO capacity is not as necessary, allowing the partner to dedicate more time and resources to working directly with the CGS. As such, the evaluation team found that *faire-faire* approach partners may have found a more optimal mix of internalizing and externalizing implementation costs.

The picture regarding local government involvement is also very mixed, and the evaluation team found few positive signs that CAP and Commune staff could eventually take the lead in sustaining WASH services. CAP staff appear to be the weakest, and the evaluation team found no evidence that training these individuals as trainers had any meaningful effect on the WASH programs in the schools. Commune staff in the Directorate of Water, however, do seem to be more qualified to play a stronger role in water management and maintenance, although their ability to conduct effective preliminary hydrology studies appears to be limited. Underlying all sections of local government, we find a set of perverse incentives in which the partners, to some extent in competition with other programs, must pay for government staff to do their jobs. Such findings suggest that the partnership limit the role of local government. Nevertheless, the evaluation team found that there are limits to limiting, as local government officials can also be uncooperative and even delay implementation.

Also, within the varying approaches to program implementation, the evaluation team found varying theories of change, especially in regards to who will be the change agent to produce behavior change. Preliminary results from the verification survey suggest that empowering mothers as stakeholders in the CGS, revenue raisers, latrine monitors and behavior change agents may be more effective than the various child-to-child approaches. However, these conclusions are based upon a very under representative verification survey, validating only that further inquiry is necessary.

The partnership also includes partners who embrace two different approaches to behavior change reinforcement: CLTS and PHAST. The debate between these two methods travels across Asia and Africa, but cannot be resolved here. Nevertheless, DC and the partnership does have to opportunity to track their different outcomes under the current MELU framework.

In regards to infrastructure, one overwhelming finding across the partnership and in consultation with school representatives on site visits is that the design of the double pit latrine, although not easily grasped by all construction firms at first, is high quality and very well thought out. DC would do well to incorporate this design into its “institutional library” and disseminate it to comparable programs outside Mali.

In regards to the actual implementation of infrastructure, the partnership as a whole appears to build decent latrines, struggle with effective water points, but provide adequate hand washing stations. The evaluation team found those partners who rely upon third party infrastructure monitoring firms tend to perform better, and those who involve the monitoring firm earlier in the procurement process (i.e. Oxfam) perform the strongest, both in terms of latrine quality and water pump quality. Finally, the contractual guarantees built into these arrangements seem to have the necessary teeth to ensure that construction firms correct their work if needed.

The evaluation team also finds varying levels of process and documentation. Superficial levels of documentation, complemented by strong informal mechanisms, may be a commonsense approach taken by most INGOs when dealing with difficult donors, such as bilaterals. Yet one advantage of the DC partnership is its emphasis on learning. As such, lackadaisical and misrepresentative documentation denies an organization the opportunity to identify systematic improvements to their processes in ways that foster organizational learning. On the other hand, we found certain partners possessed exceptionally strong processes in response to their large portfolios, yet in practice they lacked the staffing to be able to effectively put these systems into practice. Indeed, human resource issues and varying turnover rates goes a long way in explaining the partner variation we found.

In regards to partner ME&L systems, we found a strong tendency across the partnership to tick the box and produce formal reports that lacked useful information. We also failed to find clear guidance on how issues were addressed if they did manage to make it into M&E reports. Again, this is a common practice and an understandable solution to inflexible donors, but this does come at the cost of institutional learning, as solutions rests within the personal relations of the individual. In general, with some notable exceptions, the partners’ M&E systems were geared more towards reporting functions than to tracking behavior change. This is of course partially due to the fact that an Emory field team has been dispatched to measure outcomes and impacts separately.

In conclusion, knowing when to use an evaluation to justify the adoption of best practice and when to let diversity continue is difficult decision. The key question is “Have we learned enough from this evaluation to make a good practice our standard practice?” Our answer is: Not entirely. We feel strongly that a new approach to capacity building should be adopted, that third party infrastructure monitoring firms bring worthwhile value added, and that limited the decision making power of local government is necessary. But our findings regarding many other aspects of the efficiency of the program, such as who are the most effective primary change agents, under what conditions to use direct implementation, how best to work in urban environments, etc. – still require a lot of research. As such, the high level of diversity DC has allowed its partners will continue to improve efficiency.

EFFECTIVENESS

Perhaps the greatest innovation of the Dubai Care’s WASH in Schools program in Mali has been the Steering Committee (SC) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit (MELU) structure. Typical consortium partnerships are structured around a prime partner who delves out activities and functions to subcontracted partners. The advantage of this is that the prime is ultimately responsible and takes overall ownership of the program’s goals, while the subs are assigned clear tasks that support the prime. This has been the dominate paradigm of consortium partnerships for the past decades. Alternatively, egalitarian based consortiums based upon joint contracts are notoriously dysfunctional, suffer from “free-rider” problems of unaccountability, compete internally, and often face severe paralysis. As such, most donors prefer to have one contractual partner they can hold accountable, and leave it to them to manage the others.

DC breaks with this paradigm through its SC and MELU model. Composed of one senior representative from each of the five partners (all country directs, except for UNICEF), the SC makes decisions through consensus among all partners. Interestingly, these partners have no formal agreements or contracts amongst themselves, but instead have bilateral agreements directly with DC. Each Partnership member is expected to champion at least one learning theme and thus dedicate additional activities and related resources to those themes.⁹ To be sure, there is a SC terms of reference, but the partners are by no means obligated to work with each other, or resist the temptation to pass of tasks and responsibilities to the others.

Similarly, the MELU is composed of partner representatives who work jointly to create tools and come to decisions. The MELU is divided into three coordinating sections, the Hard Focal Point team, the Soft Focal Point team and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team, all of which are coordinated by UNICEF representatives. These units also lack formal contractual relations amongst themselves, but nevertheless dedicate substantial amounts of their time to the MELU despite their full time obligations as individual partner functionaries.

The section of the evaluation will explore if the SC/MELU structure is in fact working, if so, why, what learnings are being captured and exchanged within and outside of the partnership, and what are the limits of these arrangements. Specifically, this section addresses these questions of the Mid-term Evaluation TOR:

How well is the project achieving its planned results in hardware, software, governance and advocacy? How effective is the institutional structure, supported by the Steering Committee and MELU, in:

- a) contributing to institutional and management capacity?*
- b) leveraging MEL for integrated learning?*
- c) sustaining the program?*

In doing so, the evaluation team reformulated the questions according to the following format:

- a) How well does the SC/MELU function? Why or why not?

⁹ As a reminder, those themes are Communication for Development: UNICEF; Local Governance: Save the Children; Low Cost Technology – Sanitation: WaterAid; Low Cost Technology – Water Supply: Oxfam; Sustainability and CBO Capacity Building: CARE

- b) To what extent is “learning” occurring within the program? And What is the continued relevance of the “thematic leads” of each partner?
- c) To what extent is learning being transferred outside the program?
- d) How effective have the formal learning activities (e.g. Emory’s impact evaluation and the substudies) been to date?

This section ends some preliminary statements about the limits of the SC/MELU model and its potential for improvement, as well as concludes with a series of recommendations that flow out of the discussion.

HOW WELL DOES THE SC/MELU FUNCTION?

Steering Committee

All five partners were unanimous in their positive feedback of the SC, and all felt it was an extremely effective strategy coordination mechanism. The evaluation team found that the SC functions extremely well and has successfully achieved the preliminary tasks as per the SC Terms of Reference, such as the creation of a common strategic framework, agreement on geographic coverage and coordination of individual partner proposals. Such decisions were more or less reached through consensus across the partnership.

Behind the ostensibly egalitarian representation, UNICEF’s coordination role placed it in a particularly advantageous position to direct meeting agendas and influence outcomes. Not that this was reported to be a problem by the NGO partners. All NGO partners, with STC and Care in particular, enjoy the benefits of UNICEF’s extra coordination efforts, the knowledge transfer of UNICEF’s best practices, the credibility of the organization’s program designs and M&E systems, and the added leverage UNICEF provides when negotiating with DC. Although informal, UNICEF in essence acts as the benevolent leader of the group.

The evaluation team found that the SC is currently relevant in three primary areas: messaging, cost sharing and accountability.

Messaging: As the crisis in the North began to widen and it became clear that both CARE and Oxfam would need to scale back their operations, the SC played a strategic role in vetting how the partnership would present the situation to DC. To be sure, both CARE and Oxfam already had reached their decisions mostly independent of the SC. Oxfam saw clearly how the conditions of instability would clearly undermine the goals of the program and potentially lead to activities that would have no impact. CARE, on the other hand, had very strong partners in Timbuktu and was more reluctant to turn their back on the gains already made. Moreover, despite 10 years of efforts in Bandiagara, CARE understood that the implementation capacity of its partners in the district was low and successful implementation would be a challenge. Their decision to adjust was not an easy one. The SC offered the opportunity to vet the decisions in a collaborative forum and present the way forward as property of the partnership.

Cost Sharing: Aside from a few lower level cost sharing efforts across the MELU (e.g. hygiene kit prices), the SC has been reluctant to share detailed cost information or to conduct a comparative costing analysis. Partners argued that their implementation conditions varied too much to produce meaningful comparisons. Their varying procurement mechanisms also don’t leave much room for

flexibility, i.e. there is probably little room for improvement in terms of cost savings. The exception was UNICEF, who is about to become the prime recipient on a large CIDA contract and would benefit from having the budget information of those partners it may take on as subs. Otherwise, a joint budget analysis is unlikely unless mandated by DC.

On the other hand, budget information is discussed when new situations arise that require additional resources. In these cases, NGO partners usually first turn to UNICEF, whose budget is twice the size of the next largest partner and who has matching funds, to fill the gaps. NGO partners then are asked to contribute proportionally according to the size of their budget. The strongest example of this is found in the reallocation of M&E money to support the Emory field monitoring team. Although the partners had no contractual incentive to do so, the partners/consortium believed that long term support from Emory in principle would be valuable. The SC members sat together and discussed financial contributions in detail until enough money was found. Were the SC/MELU based upon a Prime/Sub arrangement, it is highly unlikely members would come together in a similar exercise to support Emory out of their own budgets.

Accountability: During every SC meeting the MELU Coordinator presents partner progress on the Implementation Dashboard. The Dashboard actually is composed of two parts: a combined hard/soft progress report and a more elaborate soft progress report. The usefulness of the dashboard is of course its potential to be used as an accountability tool to gauge partner progress relative to the others. But as of yet, the SC has not used the dashboard as such, i.e. partners have not asked other partners to explain why they are behind or ahead, or to make adjustments. Although the SC does not have the authority to hold its members accountable and ask a partner to change mechanisms, there still exists an opportunity to use the dashboard as a conversation starter to share best practice information and to share hard lessons learned.

Individual SC members held varying views of the dashboard's efficacy. The Oxfam Country Director, for example, typically calls a staff meeting after the SC has met to share the latest progress with the Oxfam team, asking them to explain relative delays and advances. She then keeps the dashboard results posted at her desk as a reminder of Oxfam's progress. The STC Country Director, by contrast, felt that the dashboard's results could be misleading, as it does not present the varying contexts in which each partner operates. Although the dashboard has not led to a full-on competition among partners, it is clear that they are very aware of its findings and the perceptions of varying levels of efficiency it suggests. Yet as mentioned before, the evaluation team found no evidence that the partnership used the dashboard as a conversation starter to ask "how did you do so well?"

It should be noted that the dashboard presupposes an extremely high levels of coordination and information sharing, which typically go beyond those found in most consortium arrangements. It thus serves as a testimony to the commitment of the partners to work together. However, the evaluation team did find that the MELU coordinator invests a great deal of time into the quality control of the dashboard, and has discovered that partners apply varying levels of rigor to their contributions. Specifically, some partners report an activity as completed when in fact others define it as still ongoing. UNICEF stated that they allow some partners to do this as a means of ensuring that the implementation gap does not become even wider.

Finally, the SC's ToR does also mention that partners will develop a joint national advocacy strategy to promote the program. In practice, this falls to UNICEF to take the lead. The evaluation team

found that the SC still lacks an advocacy strategy, and that this is a pressing need many partners would like to see addressed. This will be discussed in more detail in the Sustainability section of this report.

MELU

As with the SC, overall partner support for the MELU was positive, especially in comparison with the current UN-led humanitarian response cluster groups (which were deemed as a waste of time). Recent turnover of UNICEF staff prevented the evaluation team from gaining a more comprehensive picture of how well each MEL unit functions. Partner staff did indicate that the largest challenges arose at the beginning of the program. For example, the Hard focal point team dedicated large amounts of energy developing a common Latrine design, which underwent many modifications. But the outputs are impressive, and the MELU has generated a number of shared tools, which the partners more or less have adopted as their standard. Some examples are:

1. Promotion des bonnes pratiques et de la gouvernance liées à l'hygiène en milieu scolaire
2. L'Initiative Dubai Cares au Mali pour l'eau, l'assainissement et l'hygiène en milieu scolaire
3. Rapport de l'enquête de base
4. Guide Pratique du suivi-évaluation-capitalisation
5. Points d'eau, latrines, lave-mains et kits d'hygiène en milieu scolaire

Many of these have been subjected to numerous revisions, which have been diligently tracked by the UNICEF MELU Coordination. Nevertheless, the evaluation team found partners using different versions of the same tool.

Although the MELU originally met on a quarterly basis, the departure of the original UNICEF hard focal point has led to very infrequent meetings. The Hard team only met once last year (during the November mid-term review), and is currently not functioning. This will hopefully change once the new UNICEF HFP Coordinator arrives. Of the three, only the ME&L group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis, and works together on joint monitoring operations using a comprehensive checklist tool.

The interdependency of the SC and the MELU cannot be overemphasized, i.e. one cannot exist without the other. Were DC to build a SC structure with no MELU to put into operation the nuts and bolts of coordination, shared tool formation, etc., the SC would have no other mechanism for this to unfold, and go the way of many useless UN cluster groups. Conversely, it is doubtful that MELU representatives would work together as closely as they do without the top cover provided by the SC mandate. In other words, the effectiveness of this structure begins by engaging country director staff to give the go ahead to create a space to work together, which then relies upon mid-level technical staff to work out exactly how to do that.

WHY DOES IT FUNCTION?

The SC has clearly been an effective coordination mechanism for the partnership. Given the poor performance track record of most consortiums of this nature, it is useful to ask why the DC SC functions so well. More precisely, it is useful to understand if the SC's effectiveness is the function of specific individuals, of the function of the way it has been structured, which implies that it could be replicated in other contexts.

The Individual and Mali Specific Explanation

Partner staff frequently explained why the SC/MELU works so well in terms of individual explanations. First, most of the country directors already had pre-established working relationships with each other on other consortiums, and formalizing those through the SC was easy to do.¹⁰ Many partner staff have also previously worked for other partners. Mali itself does not have many INGOs that are competitive in the WASH space, and so the peer pressure to work together effectively is very high. They also all had a shared understanding that everyone would get something out of it (a vision that varies by individual), and ostensibly all are committed to the program's success. The individual efforts of the original WASH coordinator (Nicholas Osbert) and the current MELU coordinator (Jeremie Toubkiss) were also cited as instrumental. Finally, the current crisis in Mali only strengthened the partnership by bringing people together to achieve urgent and relevant goals.

The result of these factors, combined with the continued success of the SC in tackling larger issues, has given it some durability, even in the face of staff turnover. New SC and MELU members will not only face peer pressure from other members to be a team player, but will face similar pressures from their own organization to do so. As convincing as this explanation is, it is extremely difficult to replicate as a model as “finding good people” is always the priority of an organization, but is not enough to ensure those people will be found.

The Structural Explanation

Although it is true the partnership's collegial relationship is due in no small part to the individuals who constitute it, the evaluation team identified a number of “structural” elements in DC's SC/MELU model and process that appear to contribute to its success. These include:

- ***Autonomy to develop the SC and MELU ToR without Dubai Care's dictating the terms.*** Interestingly, all five partners were first given the space to express what they wanted early on, which some partners felt made them more willing to reach subsequent compromises, especially because DC let this process unfold organically. Moreover, because contracts are bilateral, any additional efforts partners put in the program are the result of genuine cooperation. This in turn increases levels of ownership and commitment.
- ***The choice of Country Directors as SC representatives was smart.*** These individuals all occupy similar levels and thus speak as equals, and not as junior staff who need clearance from above. This was deemed necessary by the NGOs, as Country Directors had the authority to challenge UNICEF in ways that junior staff wouldn't. This also sent a message that each partner was serious about their involvement.
- ***Good balance between equality and efficiency.*** Despite the widely varying award sizes, the partners all indicated that they sit as equals on the SC and all have something worthwhile to contribute. Partners with unique or niche skills, such as WaterAid, are also seen as valuable members despite their smaller size. Even so, the designation of a UNICEF MELU coordinator appears to also have been crucial for the partnership to move forward. In this, UNICEF is greatly appreciated not only for its internal coordination, but also for its ability to negotiate with DC on behalf of the entire partnership.

¹⁰ For example, Oxfam works with STC on nutrition, with Care in neighboring countries, with UNICEF on humanitarian interventions and have partnered with WaterAid on various projects throughout Mali.

- **Respect for Diversity:** In contrast to other consortium experiences, the fact that the SC/MELU members are allowed to continue to use the mechanisms and systems of their choosing is a powerful incentive for honest cooperation. Moreover, by having a MELU in place, partners are given a space to freely decide for themselves which innovations to adopt to improve their efficiency.

In summary, balanced equality with efficiency, autonomy to define their own relevance, respect for diversity, and staff *gravitas* - when combined with a SC/MELU structure that first provides the top cover to work together, then creates a space for the doers to do - seem to be essential elements DC should consider when structuring future consortiums. One thing the partner's didn't mention is that they are all implementing the same package (with some variations) in discrete geographies. As such, it is not clear how well a SC/MELU would function in a complex program consortium, in which separate partners perform separate activities in the same geographies. The evaluation team strongly recommends DC undertake a formal comparison of its various SC/MELU consortium structures to identify best practices across the various configurations.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS “LEARNING” OCCURRING WITHIN THE PROGRAM?

WHAT IS THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF THE “THEMATIC LEADS” OF EACH PARTNER?

The evaluation team found very high levels of information sharing across the partnership. Through regular MELU meetings, annual and biannual reviews that include demonstration booths, report sharing and regular contact, the partnership is saturated with opportunities for information sharing. All partners could speak with authority about the innovations of others and knew a great deal about their varying approaches. However, when we make a distinction between the *sharing* of learning and the *application* of that learning to the partners own approach, we find a much more limited cope. Partners also tended to be over confident that their learnings had been adapted by the other partners, but further investigation revealed that oftentimes these “learnings” were not recorded anywhere or put into practice, i.e. they were in the heads of the staff members by not incorporated into organizational memory. More precisely, we find the following learnings adopted by other partners (in addition to the shared tools listed above):

CARE

CARE was confident that its incorporation of the CLTS approach in its soft activity portfolio was being picked up by most of the partnership. The evaluation team confirmed this was true, save Oxfam (who uses the PHAST approach). CARE had also developed a communal hand washing station, which other partners were interested in. Conversely, CARE has considered incorporating Oxfam's low cost hand cord pumps, but as of yet has not moved forward with anything substantial. To some extent, CARE has learned from WaterAid's attempts to adapt CLTS to an urban environment, but staff members couldn't state tangibly what this meant. No other learnings were reported.

Thematic Lead

Lastly, the concept of partner “thematic leads” was advanced by DC as a means of ensuring all partners were recognized for their unique contributions and for structuring innovation. In practice,

this has worked to a limited extent. Most of the innovations were already established prior to the program, but, as already mentioned, some development on low cost latrines and hand washing stations has occurred, as well as CARE's hard lessons in local governance. Although it certainly has not caused any harm to the partnership, the thematic lead concept has not delivered to the extent hoped.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS LEARNING BEING TRANSFERRED OUTSIDE THE PROGRAM?

DC's emphasis on learnings is more than just a means of improving internal program design and efficiency. Rather, DC envisions that its strategic focus on learning will lead to a "contagion effect" in which the learnings of the program will "infect" other partner programs and their headquarters, other organizations and the government in Mali, and, indeed, other donors. The evaluation team found some evidence to support that DC's learning focus is spreading. More precisely,

CARE

Ostensibly, CARE as an organization champions its learning agenda, and makes sure to include it in all of its proposals. The DC WASH in Schools program contributes to CARE's larger education program, which is linked to CARE's water management and food security practices. However, like Oxfam, the CARE home office does not appear as interested in the WASH in Schools development hypothesis, and the program has garnered little attention. To be sure, CARE US keeps a close eye on the WASH in Schools program but not due to the program's way of doing things. Rather, CARE US is interested in developing the CLTS approach globally, and the WASH in Schools program is seen more as a pilot for CLTS than as a breakthrough in program design. Should interest in the program increase, CARE also has an Annual Review mechanism (which is not as formal or rigorous as Oxfam's) in which DC learnings could be presented through a workshop.

In conclusion, DC's "contagion effect" appears to have some preliminary success, but is also more dependent upon the learning systems of its implementing partners, i.e. if an INGO is not set up to learn, then the DC learnings will not travel very far. On the other hand, other donors such as CIDA and the World Bank are increasingly aware of DC's approach and are experimenting with it as their own model. Lastly, UNICEF appears to be the strongest learning partner, both internally and externally. As such, the evaluation team believes that they are more likely to make adjustments to their implementation approach than the INGO partners, who tend to cling tighter to their way of doing things as an expression of their organizational philosophy/principles.

HOW EFFECTIVE HAVE THE FORMAL LEARNINGS BEEN TO DATE?

Although the evaluation team did not look at the program's impact, we were in an advantageous position to make a few observations about Emory's formal learning activities to date and future potential. First and foremost, the partners believed the baseline survey was a learning experience for them. Yet some organizations such as CARE expressed frustration that, at the time of this evaluation, only the program's output indicators have been populated as they were expecting Emory to provide more substantive outcome data after two years of operations. Indeed, one unintended

consequence of the Emory field monitoring team has been that the partner M&E teams appear to be less concerned with monitoring behavior change and WASH governance, and prefer to leave it to Emory. Emory could provide some additional technical assistance to the partner M&E teams on its methodology and approach to solve this issue.

The contributions made by the partnership to support the Emory field monitoring team reflect a strong commitment to learning about program effectiveness. On the Emory side, however, the evaluation team found a stronger allegiance to academic integrity, which implies more rigorous (and laborious) data collection methods embedded in concerns of validity and reliability. While this is a necessary requirement to conduct a sound impact evaluation, it appears to come at the expense of generating more useful information for the immediate needs of program management. For example, the behavior change and governance data collected by the verification survey is extremely useful, but limited by its sample size. But, according to the Emory representative, expanding the sample size and conducting more iterations runs the risk of Emory “influencing the scene” with its own enumerators. This is a very valid point, but time will tell if the partners themselves find the work of Emory useful for the program. Emory’s further integration within the partnership is probably limited, as the organization’s field team is not incorporated into the SC/MELU structure, and is dependent upon the consolidated contributions of the partners themselves.

In regards to the program’s substudies, the evaluation team was able to make two observations. First, the Emory team presented the preliminary findings of its hydration study to the MELU on the final day of the evaluation team’s visit. Although the partners appreciated the research design, they did express frustration with the usefulness of the study and how it could be used to adjust programming. Second, the evaluation team was surprised to discover that very few members of the partnership (save the MELU Officer and the Emory manager) had read or were familiar with STC’s “barriers to hand washing study” (including many STC staff). In contrast to the hydration study, the hand washing study was very informative and did have immediate program implications. As such, the partners appear to be making a curiously irrational decision by supporting Emory, as they are paying for information that they don’t seem interested in using.

Finally, the evaluation team has some concerns about the efficacy of the impact evaluation. During our investigation, a number of potential issues were discovered, such as treatment group schools participating in other WASH type programs, limited monitoring of the attrition of the control group, and high degrees of variation across the partnership in terms of what defines its Soft package. The impact evaluation currently has enough “power” to detect changes in primary school attendance up to 30%, but will not be able to drill down and attribute these changes to any particular partner or approach. Instead, the conclusions will be limited to the DC program as a whole. However, the recent and almost universal introduction of deworming may be a concern. Deworming is a well-established means of increasing primary school attendance in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that the impact evaluation may not be able to disentangle the effects of WASH in Schools from those of deworming. The implications are then that policy makers could use this study to justify lower cost deworming interventions without making any WASH investments. DC is advised to discuss this matter further with the Emory Primary Investigator. DC is also advised to explore other means of demonstrating the impact of the program, such as through a qualitative comparative analysis.¹¹

¹¹ QCA is a truly “mixed method” approach that arises when the number of variables outpace the number of cases, i.e. we face a loss of power. QCA is especially useful for medium sample sizes (e.g. 15 – 100) and exploring questions of multi-component programming.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the SC and MELU structure has generated a very resilient and collegial relationship within the consortium; it is an exemplar of true partnership cooperation. The SC/MELU structure is optimized in that Country Directors provide the top cover and authority to lower level staff to work together and work out the details. The evaluation team found several examples of how this structure is facilitating learnings that are greater than the sum of their parts. However, there may be many individual and unique elements that make replication of this model difficult, esp. in a Prime/Sub relationship. Moreover, learning integration has probably reached its limits, and is unlikely to lead to any further substantial organizational change.

Similarly, the evaluation team found incredibly high levels of information sharing, joint tool development, shared communications, coordination, and commitment to learning; but significantly fewer examples of these learnings actually being applied across the program. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense of “mission awareness” across the partnership and silo effects have been effectively neutralized. Other programs, and even donors, in Mali have also borrowed various aspects of the DC model. Surprisingly (and unfortunately), the majority of partner’s HQs are not as enthusiastic about the program, and each partner’s ability to “infect” its HQ depends more on the HQ’s learning systems than the innovations of this program.

Lastly, the Emory field monitoring team is a wonderful innovation that can provide independent and useful information for the Partners, including the potential for “implementation quality” indicators. The Emory Unit is also able to collect additional information and has the capacity to launch conduct sound sub studies. Yet the evaluation team was disappointed that the STC’s hand washing study was not read, and that the dehydration study, despite its strong design, appears of little use. Finally, there appears to be somewhat of a conceptual gap between the goals of Emory and the goals of the program. On the one hand, partner M&E teams are looking to Emory to play a stronger role in capturing behavior change. On the other hand, additional program supplements, such as deworming activities, may threaten the ability of Emory to test the WASH in Schools hypothesis. As such, the gap between academic rigor and program management has not yet been adequately closed.

SUSTAINABILITY

At the heart of the issue of the sustainability of the program lies the question of who is responsible for maintaining it. The efficiency section of this evaluation has already discussed and compared the ability of both LNGOs and local government to sustain the gains of the program, and has found both sets of actors lacking in capacity, mandate, accountability, and/or interest. This section will in turn discuss the ability of the national government to take the leading role in sustaining the gains of the program, and addresses the following questions of the TOR:

- What is the level of policy support provided and the degree of interaction between project and policy level?
- What is the level of ownership of the project by target groups and will it continue after the end of external support?

In doing so, the evaluation team slightly reformulated the questions according to the ability of the national government to sustain the program, as well as program's current advocacy strategy, or lack thereof:

- How likely is it that the Government of Mali will sustain the gains of the program and what are the barriers to doing so?
- What types of efforts are/should the partners be doing to improve the sustainability of the program at the national level?

This section will examine responses from the two most relevant departments of the Ministry of Education: the Directorate of Pedagogy and the Directorate of Primary Education. On the partner side, this section will mostly focus on UNICEF, the designated voice of government advocacy by the partnership.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF MALI WILL SUSTAIN THE GAINS OF THE PROGRAM? WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO DOING SO?

In 2009, the Government of Mali made promising progress with the formulation of the National Strategic Plan for the Promotion of WASH-in-Schools (SPPWIS, or the Plan). Under this framework, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education (in collaboration with government representatives from the Health, Water and Sanitation sectors) developed a hygiene education teacher training curriculum, which has been endorsed at the national level and incorporated into the Plan. This has been heralded as a major step forward for the sustainability of WASH in schools, although the curriculum has still not undergone a systematic pre-test

Since the coup d'Etat in March 2012, however, Mali's triple crises have upset all systems in the country. This abrupt change in the course of the Malian democracy has resulted in the freeze of the international development aid by most donors. Thus, the resources allocated to the different basic social services have declined significantly in the 2012 budget, and relocated to the Defense Ministry. While all sectors have declined, Water and Sanitation in Education have experienced the most extreme relative declines:

- 17% for education;
- 35% for health
- 94% for sanitation and drinking water¹

Overall, little progress has been made by the Government on WASH in Schools development, and the momentum gained in 2009 is clearly lost. Even so, the Plan and its associated hygiene education curriculum have still provided a framework within which the consortium can operate.

In regards to the program's infrastructure, government officials are quick to affirm that the program's designs and standards are in fact reflections of the Government's. Cross inquiries by the evaluation team reveal that no one in the partnership is really aware of these standards, and a visit to the Directorate of Infrastructure in the Ministry of Education also revealed that no standards or designs could be found. As such, the question of who is influencing who is a misleading one. Rather, what government officials appear to mean when they reference their "standards" is that the program has submitted its infrastructure designs to the Ministry and it has approved. The evaluation was not able to discover by what criteria approval is given or if records of these approvals are maintained. Put differently, government standards are a type of shorthand for affirming that they are in control and partners must, on some level, work through them and/or gain their approval, even if what precisely the government is controlling is unclear. Yet this type of ambiguity is common across many sub-Saharan governments, as it allows governments to accommodate multiple donor approaches. In Mali, these standards do appear to have some teeth, as the Directorate of Infrastructure indicated that low cost sanitation latrines were out of line with the standards.

The evaluation team was unable to meet with the current Interim Minister of Education, but the real institutional decision making power currently sits at the directorate level. Within the Ministry, three directorates are the most relevant: Primary Education, Pedagogy and Teacher Training. The Director of Teacher Training was unavailable, but the evaluation team did manage to meet with the other two:

Mr. Bonaventure Miaga, Director of Primary Education

The Director was involved in the early design of the program, and was the main government focal point during the initial discussions of the program. These discussions led to the formation of the SPPWIS strategy, but, like most government strategies in these contexts, this strategy lacked a clear implementation plan and standards. According to Maiga, this lack of clarity was a wonderful opportunity to develop and test various methods, standards, procedures, etc. Yet the Director was unable to identify what particular learnings he found useful. This appears to stem from two different factors. On the one hand, he complained that UNICEF was not sharing enough information about the progress of the program with his Directorate. On the other hand, it appeared that the Director had little understanding or interest in learning more. His blanket response to questions about learning from the organization was that all standards used by the program are the product of government standards, i.e. the program has in fact replicated the approach of the government and therefore there is nothing to learn. Regardless, the freedom afforded to the program from a learning perspective has not given rise to a knowledge transfer to the Government in some way, so that his Directorate will be able to better manage the implementation and

¹ Taken from Oxfam's December 2012 Interim Narrative Report #6, p. 2.

maintenance of these same services outside the program (either directly or through the management of implementing partners, other programs, etc.).

Mr. Daibate, Director of Pedagogy

In contrast to the Director of Primary Education, the Director of Pedagogy was well informed about the design of the program, and recently gave an hour-long presentation about the WASH in Schools program during a high level national education review meeting. He also offered high levels of praise for the construction quality of the infrastructure, but did note that maintenance is still a challenge. During the review, he did, however, point out that UNICEF, and the partnership by default, needed to do a better job of keeping the Ministry of Education informed of the progress of the program caused by the gap between his office and the Academies. Although the Ministry to some extent has a direct line of communication with the CAPs and the Academies, the Academies have not reported progress in over a year. Further, the Ministry had no way of knowing what the LINGO implementers were doing, who they were, how well they were implementing and providing training, and how they could be held accountable. As such, UNICEF was the only organization able to fill this information gap regarding the LINGOs, and the Ministry would like the UN body to play a stronger role not only communicating their activities, but also ensuring that they are accountable. Moreover, the Director would prefer that the program take a stronger role working with the Directorate of Teacher Training to ensure that teachers incorporate the hygiene education models (through more support to teacher training schools and pre-testing the curriculum) and dedicate less time to the one-off and on-the-job trainings provided directly to the teachers. Although the former scenario is more difficult, it will have a longer lasting effect, primarily because it will give the Government more leverage with the World Bank's Global Education Fund to scale up the Ministry's teacher training capacity.

The explanation for the varying levels of engagement between the two Directors is most likely found at the individual level, and reveals that we should treat the phrase "national government" with caution. Even so, Both are powerful players within the Ministry and any further progress on a national WASH in Schools strategy must involve them. At this time, the most realistic scenario for putting WASH in Schools back on the agenda would most likely involve the results of the impact evaluation. Should the results be positive, it would give both Directors a voice to advocate more resources to a national scale up, most likely through a GPE mechanism.

Moving forward, the Director of Pedagogy has discussed with UNICEF the possibility of a national steering committee to coordinate WASH in Schools interventions and use the program as a model. Although NGO partners were optimistic they would be included on this steering committee, the Director only confirmed that UNICEF would be a member. Of course, progress on any Ministry initiative at the moment greatly depends upon the country's resolution to its current triple crises.

WHAT SHOULD THE PARTNERS DO TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY?

Mali's triple crises create both opportunities and challenges for the partnership to advance a WASH in Schools advocacy strategy. On the one hand, the strategic decision by DC to remain while many other donors have left has put the program in a very advantageous position vis-à-vis the Government. At the very least, the program sends a message that the Government, as the main broker of the program, is still providing services to citizens. On the ground, DC partners are also able to better engage local officials to do their job, as there are no other programs for them to

support. Thus, it may be an opportune time for the partnership to advance a more aggressive advocacy strategy in exchange for the support it has maintained. On the other hand, any commitments offered by the current Minister are subject to change, as the upcoming elections are likely to result in a reshuffling at the ministerial level. Indeed, even in times of relative stability, the common problems of government resources, capacity and commitment remain a challenge that most advocacy strategies are unable to overcome. Although the potential for advocacy is there, the program currently maintains a “wait and see” posture.

This is not to suggest that all partners endorse that posture. In particular, Oxfam and WaterAid Country Directors both expressed a strong preference for the SC to develop a national advocacy strategy. UNICEF staff were also supportive of the concept, but currently have little time to the development and implementation of that strategy given their human resource constraints. UNICEF staff would also rather advocate and support the development of a clean schools certification program, modeled off of the current CLTS village certification program used by local governments. CARE and STC remained more reluctant about increasing the program’s national profile. Underneath these competing viewpoints we find two opposing views of development. One, as mentioned before, that emphasizes the responsibility of government to provide services to its citizens. The other, held by CARE and STC, that claims to represent a civil society that can step in to provide services with more efficiency, transparency and equity than the central government can. In any case, all INGO partners agreed that they lacked the capacity and credibility to mobilize a national advocacy campaign, i.e. UNICEF would have to take the lead.

CONCLUSION

The partnership faces an interesting opportunity to elevate its profile to the national level and develop an effective advocacy strategy to put WASH in Schools back on the agenda. While there are risks, a multi-scenario strategy is nevertheless worth the extra effort. Important questions to consider would be the partnership’s ability to shift focus to building the capacity of the teacher training centers this late in the program; how the impact evaluation (should it be positive) can be used as an evidence based advocacy piece; how to effectively communicate the program’s relatively high unit costs (e.g. \$22,000 per school); how to leverage the interest of GPE; and what level of government commitment would convince other donors that the Government was serious about WASH in schools.