Overall lessons learned from a full WRAF project – Tanzania, Dar es Salaam

Name of Partnership: Mlalakua River Restoration Project (MRRP)

Location: Mlalakua, Kinondoni Municipality, Wami Ruvu Basin, Dar es Salaam

Sectors involved: Liquid and solid waste management, good governance

Partners: Wami Ruvu basin Water Board (WRBWB), National Environmental Management Council (NEMC), Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC), Coca-Cola Kwanza Ltd (CC Sabco), Nabaki Afrika Ltd, Bremen Overseas Research Agency (BORDA), Nipe Fagio, IWaSP

The overall objective of the Mlalakua River Restoration Project (MRRP) was to restore the health of the Mlalakua River and to prevent further pollution on a sustained basis. This could only be achieved through the collective engagement of all relevant stakeholders, restoring the river's natural functions, and building systems to ensure sustainable management of solid and liquid waste to prevent further pollution. From the start, it was clear that experiences drawn from this initiative would be used to inspire and to inform actions aimed at improving the conditions of other rivers and streams in Dar es Salaam. The MRRP was a great learning experience because of the many lessons that came out of the whole partnership cycle.

4 key learning areas

1) Complexity of the partnership was largely due to the **number of partners:** 8 partners sitting on the steering committee (Wami Ruvu basin Water Board (WRBWB), National Environmental Management Council (NEMC), Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC), Coca-Cola Kwanza Ltd (CC Sabco), Nabaki Afrika Ltd, Bremen Overseas Research Agency (BORDA), Nipe Fagio, IWaSP). These 8 partners had equal mandate to make decisions. Therefore, with the partnership governance structure being somewhat cumbersome, common decisions and actions were difficult to take and to follow-up, which slowed down implementation.

Lessons:

- Involve decision-makers from the start and throughout each step of the projects to avoid misleading expectations. NEMC Director, WRBWB water officer, Office of the Mayor and KMC Director were involved through brief meetings organised quarterly. The challenge was that each of them expected that the

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project will be a funding opportunity for their institution, while only the KMC activities were supported financially.

- Manage partner's expectations throughout all project stage
- Plan for political risk (local elections, etc.): political agenda and political partner's private interests might come in the way of achieving project objectives

Success (despite errors): Some partners realized their own roles and responsibilities triggered by multi-stakeholder discussions and implementation of the project activities.

2) Communication was another area where mistakes were made. The lack of a clear view on communication systems commonly used by each partners led to delays in approval mechanisms for public institutions with consequences on the pace of implementation. We underestimated the impact of the differences in the level of responsiveness and in preferred modes of communications (i.e. email vs. phone calls), and the importance of communication resources (IT). We also underestimated the consequences of limited feedback from beneficiaries/communities. We believed that designated leaders of partner organizations truly represented the population of the project area, while this was not always the case. As a result, miscommunication happened, especially with turnover of leaders in public institutions. In some instances, this led to blockages in the communities preventing implementation of activities. Miscommunication contributed to fuel misunderstanding within the partnership beneficiaries.

Lessons:

- Take into consideration that local government authorities (LGA) have a top down structure. LGAs have a bureaucratic management that can lead to inefficiencies and broken communication channels.
- Informal communication complements formal contacts: phone calls and unformal meetings improve trust between partners and can help getting out of difficult situations.
- Be aware of your partner's preferred communication modality: some partners without computers couldn't read emails on a daily basis or some institutions hierarchy did not allow officers to answer emails without approval from supervisors (creating delayed or lack of response).
- Create regular opportunities for one-on-one meetings between partners working on similar activities.

Success (despite errors): the partnership opened an arena for discussions between players, connecting different levels of decision-making and departments of different organizations.

3) Capacity assessment: underestimating the impact of various levels of capacities among partners, more specifically the limited (financial, material, human, skills) resources of public partners, the lack of engagement of private sector partners, and internal changes in partner organizations resulted in delays, sometimes forcing to restart activities over and over again. This mostly resulted in challenges for building trust between partners and with community groups. Moreover, some partners had more flexibility and more resources/capacity than others, which created imbalances and some frustration caused by misunderstandings. This could have been managed better if roles and responsibilities were clearer and if partners understood each other's constraints and opportunities better.

Lessons:

- Understand and address capacity issues for all partners.
- Integrate project implementation and resource plans into partner organizations' existing budget plans
- Define roles, objectives, and scope clearly from the start and strive to get partners to raise adequate resources (in-kind and cash) to fulfil their roles
- Be flexible and focus on trust building

Success (despite errors): Partners managed to get mobilized and contribute to the achievement of the partnership objectives despite shortcomings and relational challenge.

4) When setting-up the MRRP, IWaSP **partnerships criteria** were under development and not yet formalized. The company had little stake in the project because it was not facing any direct water risk. The Mlalakua water body is not a source of livelihood for the local communities (no fishing, no water abstraction for consumption); it is a small seasonal creek. Awareness on biodiversity and health aspects was built through the project but were not recognized by most community members from the onset.

Lesson:

- Conduct water risk analysis prior to launching project: clarify reputational, operational, and regulatory water risks
- Derive partnership concept from resource and stakeholder needs and understanding (as a result of water risk assessment)
- Weakness of the partnership concept leads to limited participation of private sector actors: with an unclear perception of their water risk, private sector actors had little incentive to be part off and active members of the partnership

Success (despite errors): The project still brought multi-stakeholders together and achieved positive impacts despite lack of perceived risk and limited direct value of water source.

Contact:
Fridtjof Behnsen
IWaSP Tanzania Country Coordinator
fridtjof.behnsen@giz.de