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**THE PROCESS OF LEARNING FOR CHANGE IN  
POLICY AND PRACTICE ON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND  
HOUSEHOLD SANITATION AND HYGIENE**

Learning for change in policy and practice on Household and primary School Sanitation and Hygiene (LeaPPS) is an initiative that was implemented in partnership by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, SNV Uganda and NETWAS Uganda in 2007-2009 so as to facilitate a district-based multi-stakeholder learning process on hygiene and sanitation. It comprised 4 elements: learning sessions, capacity building, action research, and documentation and advocacy.

**Why LeaPPS?** Considering the variations across districts in sanitation standards, characterised by recurrent outbreaks of faecal-related diseases like cholera, LeaPPS set out to contribute towards improving access to sanitation and hygiene through learning and sharing. This initiative, now called LeaPP-WASH, has been implemented in the districts of Kyenjojo, Kamwenge, Arua and Koboko, and has now expanded to include more districts, and also water issues.

**Process inception:** The inception started with district assessments carried out with various stakeholders: technocrats from health, education

and water departments and from chief administrative and planning offices, NGOs staff, politicians, administrative and health officials from 2 sub counties in each district, plus journalists representing the local media. They were engaged in eight learning sessions per district between 2007 and 2009.

**The broader sector context:** The policies and guidelines at national level such as the Sanitation Memorandum of Understanding, the Kampala Declaration on Sanitation and other existing initiatives, have been found to have gaps for supporting learning and innovation in sanitation. These weaknesses include lack of focus on broader environmental sanitation issues, and lack of incentives for collective action either between ministries at national level or between ministries and local governments. Weak coordination mechanisms between the national and lower levels have also been identified as an issue.

**Why learning platforms and LeaPPS learning sessions?** These platforms created an atmosphere of learning and exchanging from local experiences that leads to dissemination for adoption, replication and scaling up. Sharing and joint learning built capacity as a result, improving performance and coordination at district and sub county level.

**Objective of LeaPPS:** To support multi-stakeholder learning on household and school sanitation and hygiene in order to influence change in practice and policy towards sustainable performance improvement.



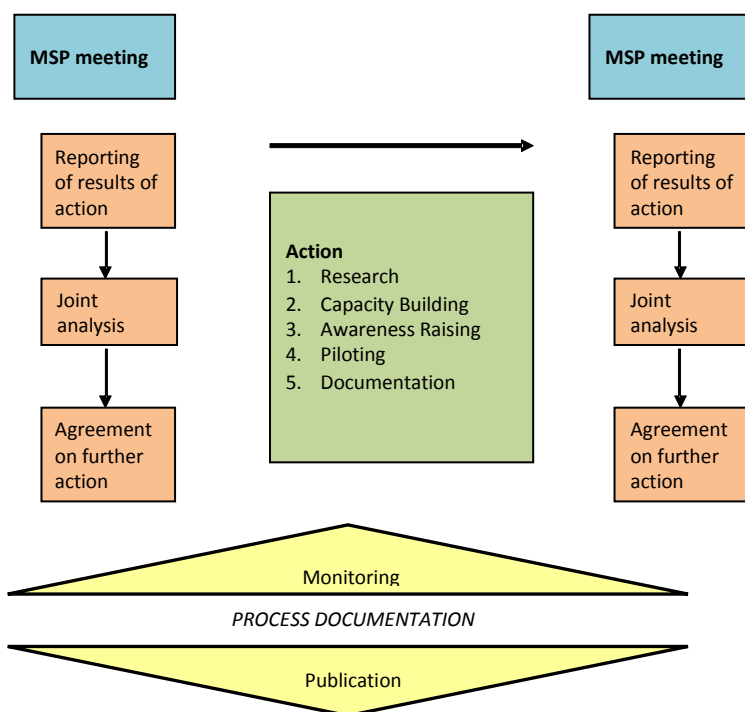
### Specific objectives of LeaPPS

- To put sanitation and hygiene higher on the agenda of politicians and technocrats, and to share promising approaches and useful information.
- To agree on approaches and methodologies in improving household and school sanitation and hygiene.
- To increase linkages between sanitation and hygiene activities and other development programmes (HIV/AIDS and accountability).
- To enhance stakeholders' capacities and knowledge for effective and sustainable sanitation and hygiene interventions.
- To improve coordination among local stakeholders within an agreed coordination framework.
- To improve communication across administrative levels between NGO and Local Governments.

**Conceptual roots and principles of LeaPPS:** LeaPPS draws on multi-stakeholder processes called Learning Alliances. Learning Alliances are aimed at building relationships, sharing information and experiences and planning for solutions to common problems that cannot be solved by a single stakeholder. When the alliance is well representative of all stakeholders, actions and solutions that are agreed upon are usually put into practice. LeaPPS platforms at district levels were

designed to influence stakeholders at sub county and national level. The Learning Alliance aims at improving how stakeholders work so that their interventions have greater impact and are better coordinated.

### ELEMENTS OF LEAPPS LEARNING PROCESS



**Learning sessions:** These lasted for 1½ days, including a field visit. The agenda for these sessions included inputs from participants and was set during a preparatory meeting with the District Department Officers, which was held before the session to ensure buy-in from the various key stakeholders. Group work, presentations, discussions and field visits were used in the



sessions, including the discussion and observation of innovative initiatives such as participatory approaches, innovative technologies, child-friendly teaching, and links between HIV/AIDS and sanitation and hygiene. These sessions aimed to:

- develop and test locally appropriate solutions and strategies to address problems,
- present, analyse and discuss relevant concepts and approaches,
- stimulate hands-on learning,
- document lessons learned,
- enhance coordination and harmonisation between stakeholders,
- identify key issues that needed follow up by the District Water and Sanitation Coordinating Committee (DWSCC).

**Capacity building and follow up:** Follow up visits were done in between the learning sessions in order to address identified learning needs and interests. These therefore provided an opportunity for feedback and sharing of practical experiences. Capacity building was provided through trainings by NETWAS, SNV and other agencies.

**Action Research:** This aimed at bringing innovation, testing, reflection and action into the learning process. It provided data and tangible results and can motivate stakeholders to take further action. Local NGOs HEWASA in Rwenzori region and Caritas Arua in West Nile region work closely with stakeholders at sub county level to implement the

research. This requires specific skills of the local NGOs involved and needs proper and intensive guidance, monitoring and documentation.

**Documentation:** Each learning session was documented and the reports shared with participants. The main elements and lessons learnt in the sessions were published in a newsletter format that is more accessible and attractive to read. Information sheets on specific topics and case studies, LePPS reports and various short documents and materials aimed at supporting learning were as well produced. Guidelines for LePPS case documentation were developed and shared.

**Phase 1: Inception phase:** This phase involved a number of activities:

- Mapping out the existing learning practices, processes and mechanisms in household and school sanitation
- Identifying constraints to institutional and individual learning and information sharing at district and sub district level
- Assessing interests, feasibility and acceptability of learning and sharing processes
- Developing a realistic framework for future district and sub county based learning
- Initiating a learning alliance with strategic and planning workshops.

Initial meetings and workshops were key in this phase since they were aimed at jointly identifying commonalities and analysing the current situation and agreeing on a common vision.



**Phase 2: establishing the learning process:** This phase involved regular learning sessions (about 3 per year) as well as follow-up capacity support. Linkage of LePPS to district and national coordination and planning structures was done through sharing of the outcomes with platforms such as DWSCCs and the National Sanitation Working Group (NSWG).

**Phase 3: consolidating lessons learned in the pilot phase and agreeing on the way forward:** This phase involved the revisiting of the initial joint vision to plan and discuss sustainability of such a learning process. This involved steps to mainstream and finance LePPS in ministries and UWASNET and perhaps further involvement of TSU staff.

**Phase 4: Ensuring sustainability/follow up:** Ensuring sustainability requires integrating the learning process into local planning cycles/structures and that learning is mainstreamed and budgeted for by local stakeholders. During this phase, opportunities to link sanitation and hygiene improvement to other programmes should also be explored.

**LESSONS ON FACILITATION, SOME HIGHLIGHTS ON INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT**

The key principles of LePPS are: participatory action research, involvement of stakeholders from different levels, building on existing structures, making use of multiple/diverse perspectives and focusing on learning for change.

**Creating a safe learning environment:** This is the primary role of the facilitator who seeks to provide encouragement for people to learn, acknowledge shortcomings and share their views. The facilitator ought to be collaborative, respectful of various perspectives and contributions and encourage listening. Some of the practical ways to create safer learning is by organising subgroups for discussion or group work, using exercises in dialoguing or assigning roles in group discussions and encouraging exchange of different perspectives. The amount of information coming from “experts” also has to be reduced to stimulate participants to discuss, think for themselves, reflect on the applicability and encourage the use of knowledge and experience readily available in the group.

**Controlling platform versus visionary and creative work:** During each session, progress since the previous platform was reviewed. Rather than blaming participants for things they would not have done, instead, encouraging reflection and analysis on the reasons behind a failure and understanding constraints for better sector performance was found to be more efficient in promoting learning and honest reporting back. It is also best to start with successes/achievements before analysing failures.

**Link with decision making structures and platforms:** There was always a need to ensure that the issues discussed in the platform were reported to the District Water and Sanitation Committees so that they were followed up accordingly.

**Whose platform? Whose programme? The issue of ownership:** Rather than viewing LePPS sessions as



a class environment, facilitators had to bear in mind that LeaPPS is a sharing and learning process in which all participants are resource persons. This implies that attendants become co-facilitators of these sessions. A focal person for LeaPPS was selected in each district to ensure that follow up actions are implemented. Invitations for participants are passed through the Chief Administrative Officer to give weight to the invitation and for accountability purposes. Participants can be supported in the following ways to take ownership: setting the agenda together with the key stakeholders in the platform, focusing on local knowledge as the starting point for group, individual learning and stimulating participants to bring their own experiences into discussions, and practicing participatory reflection and action behaviours.

**Tailoring the information so it is comprehensible and useful:** As a way of making information relevant and acceptable to the participants, the following were done: practical learning by showing/doing, experimenting and testing in the action research, further follow-up on the list of fixed participants that will receive an invitation, repeating some information in following sessions and limiting the number of items on the LeaPPS agenda to provide ample time for reflection, discussion and analysis.

#### **Further reading and links:**

Water and Sanitation Resource Centre, Uganda:  
[www.watsanuganda.watsan.net/page/602](http://www.watsanuganda.watsan.net/page/602)

LeaPPS reports and other documentation are available here:

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre:  
<http://www.irc.nl/page/38717>

A facilitation toolbox, resources on Learning Alliances and sector learning are available here:  
SNV: [www.snvworld.org](http://www.snvworld.org)