# Webwatch

*This issue we look at recent reviews of sustainability assessment tools for WASH programmes, discussions on technology development and introduction into new contexts, and ongoing debates about the links between WASH and nutrition and what this means for our programmes.*

## Sustainability tools for WASH

As part of my PhD research I worked with WaterAid's partners in Mali, using the organization's *Sustainability Framework* to help analyse the challenges in their work trying to support sustainable rural water services. I am always interested to see more frameworks like this emerge with similar aims of helping assess and improve the sustainability of WASH services.

### *Common elements in sustainability frameworks*

Improve International's blog is a good resource for updates and comments on WASH sector developments. Following discussions at World Water Week in Stockholm, they created a simple summary table on their blog to show the common elements across some of the different frameworks, such as economic/financial aspects, environmental issues, institutional and governance arrangements, technical issues, and social dynamics. The exercise also highlighted some of the elements which are less often included, such as planning for future expansion or considering equity.
<http://improveinternational.wordpress.com/2013/10/08/common-elements-in-sustainability-frameworks/>

### *Mapping sustainability assessment tools to support sustainable water and sanitation service delivery (October 2013)*

The IRC Triple-S project has published a more detailed review of five of the different sustainability assessment tools. They selected those which have a track record of being used for WASH programme monitoring and provide a quantified sustainability 'score' for the programme. There are three key messages that I took away from this work. Firstly, it is a great sign that there is a growing movement to actually put these tools into practice. Secondly, the authors observe that the cost of implementing the tools (about $35,000 per application) is relatively small compared with the size of the investments involved in the programmes, so there is hope for broader uptake. Finally, the next key challenge is to move from tools which are used for particular programmes to broader methods which can support national sector monitoring.
<www.waterservicesthatlast.org/media/publications/mapping_sustainability_assessment_tools>

*Stephen Jones (stephenjones27@gmail.com) is the WASH M&E Coordinator for the DRC WASH Consortium, a DFID-funded programme of five international NGOs.*


*http://dx.doi.org/10.3362/1756-3488.2014.009, ISSN: 0262-8104 (print) 1756-3488 (online)*

## Thinking about how new WASH technologies are introduced

Although technology may be just one aspect of sustainability, it is clearly a crucial one. In my current role working with the DRC WASH Consortium, we are engaged in ongoing debates with users, implementers, suppliers, government, and donors about technology choices and development. These debates are also reflected in recent initiatives in the wider WASH sector.

### *How Three Handpumps Revolutionized Rural Water Supplies (2013)*

Eric Baumann and Sean Furey of the Rural Water Supply Network take a fascinating look back at how three of the most common and well-known handpump designs in the world developed from piloting to widespread use: the India Mark II/III, the Afridev, and the Zimbabwe Bush Pump. This field note is a good reminder to young WASH professionals like me of the importance of history and developments in the field before we were born! The debates around standardization, local manufacturing, quality control, ease of repair, community management, and supply chains continue today. The authors suggest that key lessons for developing other WASH technologies include using partnerships across government, private sector, and international organizations for development and scaling up, and emphasizing the wider factors listed above. They also note possible areas for future innovation for handpump water points, such as improving access for people with physical impairments, or linking to mobile phone technologies for monitoring purposes.
<www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/475>

### *The Technology Applicability Framework (TAF) and Technology Introduction Process (TIP) for WASH technologies*

The WASHTech initiative (a multi-partner programme with members including RWSN, WaterAid, IRC, Cranfield University, SKAT, Trend, WSA, KNUST, and Netwas Uganda) is one example of how these debates about technology development and introduction are being addressed in the sector today. Earlier this year at a workshop I attended in London, representatives of WASHTech presented their work-in-progress on the Technology Applicability Framework (TAF) to members of the UK Sanitation Community of Practice (SanCoP). Now WASHTech has launched its website and participatory tools to help support the introduction of specific WASH technologies into particular contexts. The framework can be used at the stage of piloting a technology to promote discussion about its potential regarding applicability, scalability, sustainability, and uptake. The tools can also be used to monitor progress of the actual introduction of the technology. Along with other SanCoP participants we tried out some of the tools through a role-play exercise, and I am looking forward to seeing the results of using the approach in real life. The WASHTech website already has a series of case study examples from Ghana and Uganda which help illustrate how the process can work.
<http://washtechnologies.net/>

## Updates on debates linking WASH and nutrition

This year has also seen a flurry of research and publications on the issue of WASH and nutrition, since research and experience have shown that food-based nutrition interventions are not enough to address the huge challenge of childhood undernutrition around the world.

### *UK Launch of Cochrane Review on WASH and Childhood Undernutrition (November 2013)*

The Cochrane review, funded by DFID through the SHARE Research Consortium, provides the most up-to-date synthesis of evidence linking improved WASH to childhood nutrition. There are both direct and indirect pathways which link WASH and the growth of children. The direct pathways include diarrhoea, environmental enteropathy, and worm infections, while the indirect routes concern issues such as the time taken to collect water (which reduces the time available for families to ensure a hygienic environment for their children). The review focused on the direct pathways, using 14 studies in low- and middle-income countries. The analysis suggests that WASH interventions (specifically solar disinfection of water, provision of soap, and improvement of water quality with an intervention time of 9–12 months) slightly but significantly increased the height of children under 5 years of age. This review provides an initial evidence base, with plenty more work to do on researching the longer-term effects, the effect of different interventions (especially sanitation), and how to improve the links between nutrition and WASH programmes in practice.
<www.shareresearch.org/NewsAndEvents/Detail/
Cochrane_Review_WASH_Undernutrition_Launch>

### *USAID Webinar on Environmental Enteropathy and WASH (September 2013)*

This USAID webinar summarized some of the specific thinking on environmental enteropathy (a condition of the small intestine which reduces the ability to absorb nutrients) and ideas for integrating WASH into nutrition programmes, which provoked a healthy email debate in my organization about how to practically link the two issues in our own work. Key issues discussed included how to address child hygiene; for example, many children in low-income countries play and eat on the ground where the household's chickens are also running around, and therefore consume chicken faeces when they put their hands in their mouths. The presentation suggests thinking about 'Baby WASH' interventions which focus specifically on children and caregiving, such as enclosed play areas for babies. It will be interesting to see how practical these ideas turn out to be in programming.
<www.fsnnetwork.org/webinars/USAID-Webinar-on-Environmental-Enteropathy-and-WASH>