Adam Smith International

Strengthening water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH) systems

Sustainable & inclusive WASH systems

Improving access to climate resilient water & sanitation services

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene – known collectively as WASH – has profound wider socio-economic impacts, in improving healthcare and reducing poverty. Access to effective WASH systems is particularly important for women and girls, who often bear the burden of collecting water and caring for relatives made sick by lack of WASH.

> Globally, 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and over half the world's population - 4.2 billion people - lack safely managed sanitation services

Adam Smith International (ASI) are specialists in the water sector and have advised governments and institutions globally in all aspects of water policy and legislation, water regulation and water resource management. We also support institutional reform and strengthening of water management institutions, and work with the public and private sector to design and implement sustainable climate resilient water projects for investment.

We work closely with policymakers, legislators, regulators, utilities and the private sector, providing targeted technical advice and capacity building tailored to ensure effective management of water resources, improve water security and strengthen sanitation and hygiene. Our expertise includes:

Water policy, legislation and strategy

Working with governments and other stakeholders to improve cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination at all levels; improve the quality of strategic planning and decision-making for water use and allocation; and develop an integrated approach to water resource management that supports water security at country level and in transboundary basins.

Water regulation and management

Working with governments and regulators to develop and implement regulatory structures that will achieve context-specific, sustainable results. We have adapted international best practice in water supply management and water regulation reform in some of the most challenging environments.

Institutional development and capacity building

Building institutional capacity at national and local levels in designing delivery models for water services and long-term management of water resources.

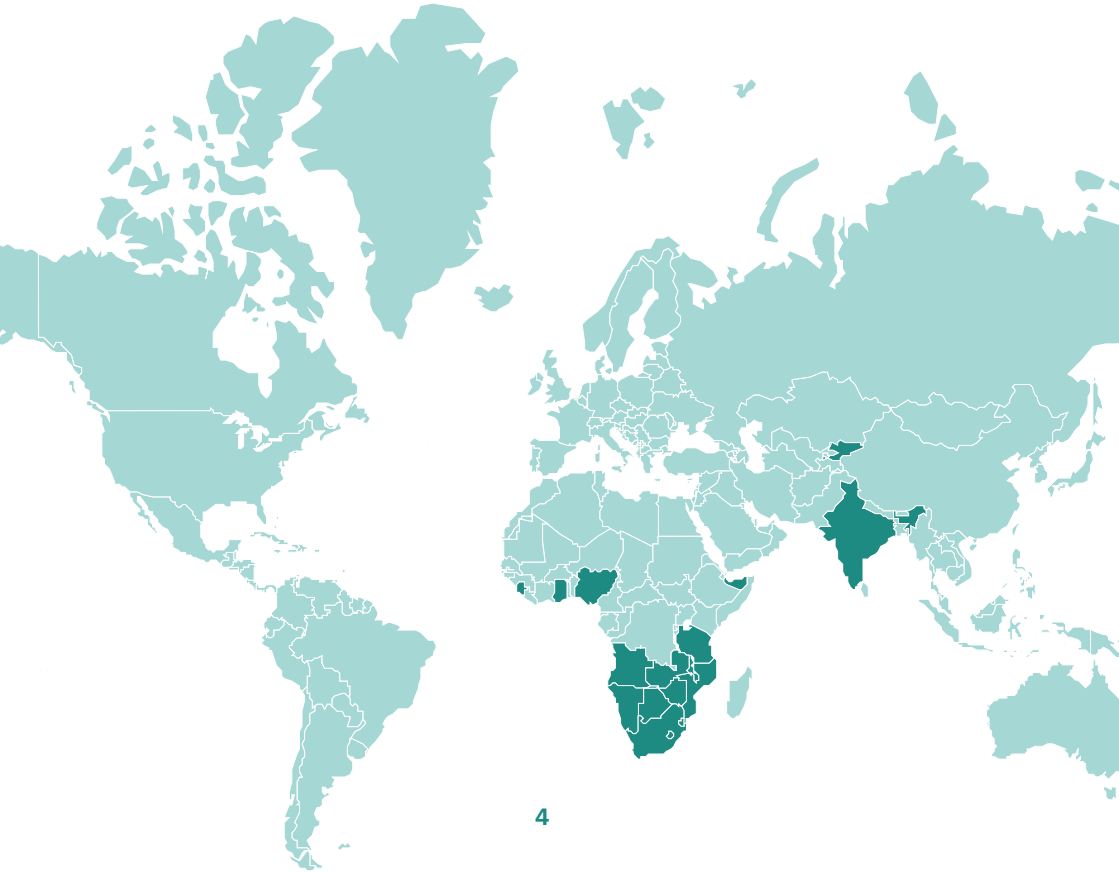
Water financing and private sector participation

Working with governments and the private sector to address the structural and regulatory barriers to investment. This includes managing private sector participation in water to produce solutions that maximise investment, support socio-economic development and improve sustainable access to vulnerable, underserved communities.

Project conceptualisation, management and implementation

Providing support for the identification and development of priority water security infrastructure projects from design to implementation, with a strong focus on the integration and promotion of inclusiveness, benefit realisation and climate resilience.

Our footprint:



Proven results & experience

Advising governments and institutions on sanitation and hygiene, covering aspects such as policy and sector planning, institutional review, technologies, financing, behaviour change and market-based approaches.

- Conducted over 140 assignments in the WASH sector
- WASH portfolio totalling over £35m
- Implemented WASH programmes in 17 countries
- Bring over 25 years experience
- Worked with over 60 clients across the water value chain, including governments, water boards, regulators, utilities, and transboundary institutions

10 lessons learned in WASH delivery

Systems thinking is an emerging paradigm in the WASH sector, which is why learning and experiences need to be documented. Below our Senior WASH Adviser, St John Day, outlines 10 lessons from our experiences in Sierra Leone.

1 Visualise the WASH system

The first step to building an effective WASH system is to visualise it at national and local levels. This is best achieved through involving a wide range of stakeholders to explore what the system looks like and what change is required. A key requirement is to identify short, medium and long term actions for each key building block component.

2 Know how the system can be influenced

It is important to understand how the system can be influenced. Political Economy Analysis is a useful tool for understanding and visualising how existing systems work. It is also vital to recognise and respect government's priorities and to build relationships with key decision-makers. Know who is best placed to build and maintain the relationship and remember that senior Government officials may leave their post. Working with civil service departments and local government will also increase impact.

3 Ensure users have a voice

Service users or User Associations need to have formal representation in the design of WASH systems. The modalities for ensuring users have a voice needs to be agreed upon so their views and concerns can be expressed routinely. Clarity is also required as to how the WASH System will be accountable to users.

4 Focus on a District Wide Approach

To build a WASH system that works at scale, a favourable starting point is to begin at the district level through adopting a District Wide Approach (DWA). Districts set their own development targets on an annual basis and they develop costed WASH plans annually. The DWA is sufficiently large to show how the different system components can work effectively and achieve impact at scale. It also fits well with decentralisation plans and national WASH policies.Simultaneously, work together with government partners and donors to encourage meaningful decentralisation of human, material and financial resources.

5 Focus on solving the problems that real people face

When building the components of a WASH system it is important to continue to solve real problems that matter to people. As well as working at national level, this can be achieved through concentrating on local level activities which often ensure more tangible results for people.

6 Build partnerships and networks and establish trust

WASH systems cannot be built in isolation. Work with other like-minded organisations and people so these approaches can be developed and sustained.Helping national institutions to develop a long term plan is key and support them to attract finance and support for implementation. Think how strategic partnerships and networks can continue to function effectively as donor priorities change, projects end and individuals come and go. Encourage all parties to develop a joint plan, work together and build lasting partnerships that are built on mutual respect.

7 Plan infrastructure improvements early

Infrastructure planning is vital to secure bulk water resources and ensure the most cost effective options can be identified and developed. This means detailed feasibility studies are required at an early stage to ensure the preferred long-term options are not threatened by land degradation or new developments. Governments will also need to establish a mechanism for planning, financing, designing and constructing mega and micro scale infrastructure simultaneously, so that water resources and water supply infrastructure is enhanced.

8 Monitor, learn and adjust

It's important to monitor, evaluate and learn along the way. A thorough review of monitoring capacity is recommended from the outset so that greater human resources and finances can be provided. Monitoring systems should be embedded at the outset, and reviewed continuously. However, monitoring alone will be of limited use if there is no learning or corrective follow-up action. Adopt a flexible approach, which revises and amends the project in response to what is working and what is not.

9 Chart a new path with water utilities

One of the most effective ways to deliver safe, affordable and sustainable water and sanitation for all will be to work directly with existing water utilities. Typically, water utilities may be some way off their desired performance levels, and their infrastructure requires substantial rehabilitation and expansion. Support water utilities to develop a Business and Investment Plan that builds on their core strengths and reflects the utilities future aspiration. This framework should provide them with a plan to better engage their customers, improve performance levels and attract further investment. Consider using an AquaRating survey to establish an objective baseline of the utility's performance; inform the development of an action plan; and enable improvements to be measured over time.

10 Planning the journey and the destination

Regardless of how the WASH system is visualised it will take time to build and strengthen. From our experience, it will be helpful to break the work down into phases. For example, Phase 1 may want to focus on short term actions - doing what you can with what you have. This phase should be used to build confidence and trust. Phase 2 should focus on attracting increased donor and private sector support and investment as government leadership becomes more evident. During Phase 3 the system should be more mature and there should be increased signs of government leadership and national investment.

Our approach to building WASH systems mainstream four core principles, providing a combination of flexibility and pragmatism

Demand-led

Our work is problem and context-driven. Understanding client needs and priorities in complex political and institutional environments is central to what we do, and allows us to develop bespoke solutions which effectively include stakeholders from the outset throughout delivery and create sustainable impact.

Based on experience

Through our diverse experience of the water sector, we have a holistic understanding of water resource management across the entire water value chain. We draw on this experience and our multi-disciplinary and diverse skillsets to ensure effective and responsible water and sanitation management.

Fostering multi-sectoral, inclusive and resilient responses

We work across the full delivery cycle to maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits with a view to increasing participation and equitable access of water users. We adopt and promote robust climate resilience approaches to water resource management and the development of WASH infrastructure to bring about solutions that are both effective and enduring.

Sustainable

We create incremental and sustainable change, and long lasting impact by ensuring that the right groups are brought in early on. We focus on the overall system rather than one-off interventions, ensure that a clear framework is in place, and that actors understand their mandates such that WASH infrastructure and services can be sustained properly.

Sustainable & inclusive WASH systems

Below we present a selection of our flagship WASH initiatives

Supporting the national water & sanitation policy in Sierra Leone

Adam Smith International supported the Government of Sierra Leone in defining and implementing the National Water and Sanitation Policy, through the DFID funded Sierra Leone WASH (SL-WASH) programme. The programme also supported the financial sustainability of regional and local water utility organisations, including the Guma Valley Water Company.

The programme aimed to improve access and expand the provision of water supply services to the nation's rural poor.Our team facilitated the mapping of close to 30,000 water points, to enable the government to plan for servicing communities that currently go unserved. As a result, we facilitated national training to improve the construction and supervision of boreholes in order to keep services working

Implemented at the height of the Ebola crisis, the SL-WASH programme played an integral role in emergency Ebola response support to the Government of Sierra Leone. This included supporting the government to prioritise WASH activities in the response and developing guidelines for WASH professionals.

Enhancing Southern Africa's climate resilient WASH systems

ASI delivered sustainable small-scale water infrastructure across 11 Southern African countries to improve water security for over 2 million people. The £25.4m DFID-funded Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF) targeted infrastructure development in transboundary water basins.CRIDF worked across three channels:

- **Small-scale infrastructure projects:** CRIDF identified, prepared and implemented climate resilient water infrastructure projects in transboundary basins with a pro-poor focus. This included providing sustainable and equitable water service delivery and appropriate WASH facilities and sanitation to 12 border towns in Zambia.
- **Infrastructure finance:** CRIDF mobilised infrastructure finance interventions to complement the infrastructure preparation activities. This work focused on investigating and securing innovative finance arrangements and funding partners for the implementation of our infrastructure projects. CRIDF mobilised over 50 interventions that have progressed projects at various preparation stages toward construction.
- **Technical assistance:** CRIDF worked alongside various water utilities to help pilot specific areas for innovative water service delivery developments. For example, CRIDF supported the Makonde Plateau Water Supply and Sanitation Authority to improve water supply and sanitation in the area and build institutional capacity in the Makonde Plateau in southern Tanzania.

Supporting the regulation of Ghana's water system

ASI's Ghana Water Sector Reform programme supported the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission to conduct a cost-of-service study in order to develop a new tariff structure and develop a regulatory pro-poor social policy. This involved conducted a major country wide socio-economic survey based on a questionnaire methodology to assess the affordability of water tariffs to domestic users, particularly those on low incomes. The programme also provided support to incentivise water delivery institutions to provide access to piped water to both poor communities and areas which are presently unconnected. ASI also advised on a public awareness campaign and establishment of customer complaints mechanisms.

In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, Adam Smith International is supporting the prioritisation of WASH and drawing on lessons learned from our experiences supporting the Ebola repsonse in West Africa.

Improving water supply in Mongolia

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) requested ASI to conduct a political economy analysis for its second upcoming Mongolia compact programme focused on increasing urban water supply in Ulaanbaatar. As part of its £350 million compact programme, MCC wanted to invest in additional water supply well-fields and build a wastewater treatment plant.

ASI developed an analysis of the Mongolian context and reviewed the underlying incentives and stakeholder dynamics of the water and wastewater sector in Ulaanbaatar. The project team engaged over 60 stakeholders from across the national and municipal governments, regulators, utilities, development agencies and the private sector, as well as conducting a water consumer survey among apartment dwellers in Ulaanbaatar.

Encouraging private participation in the water sector in Lesotho

The Government of Lesotho asked ASI to advise on the development of an effective legislative and regulatory framework for the water sector. We also made recommendations concerning the devising and implementation of a programme for private sector participation in the delivery of water and sewerage services. This involved refining and developing an effective legislative and regulatory framework for the water sector, specifying the best form of management contract, and developing the acceptance criteria, initiating the bidding process and assisting the Government in awarding the short term management contract to the preferred bidder.

Institutional strengthening of the Guma Valley Water Company

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) contracted Adam Smith International to build the capacity of greater Freetown's water utility, the Guma Valley Water Company, which provides water for over 1.5 million people. The institutional strengthening focussed on improving the capacity of the Guma Valley Water Company in Sierra Leone to perform core operational and commercial functions to improve service quality and increase revenue collection.

The team conducted a systems assessment, which assessed the Water Company's assets and identified immediate capital and operational improvements to be made to improve service quality. Similarly, they also assessed transmission pipelines and the water treatment plant reservoir facility, and provided recommendations for rehabilitation, repairs and replacements.

The team also conducted a GIS mapping of distribution lines on behalf of the Water Company, an exercise that previously had not been undertaken since the 1970s, and developed a complementary GIS database for data collection, management, and publication. The GIS mapping involved extensive field surveys to map existing assets. Following the development of the GIS database, our team trained Guma Valley Water Company officials in how to use and administer the database. This capacity building approach was centred on learning-by-doing.

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