



# HOW TO IDENTIFY HIGH QUALITY WASH PROGRAMS

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serving the poor and building Christ's Kingdom.

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## How to Identify High Quality WASH Programs

### **Idea in Brief**

Water access, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions can be some of the most impactful and cost-effective strategies to alleviate suffering, share the gospel, and provide essential building blocks for community development in the Majority World. However, not all WASH development practices are created equal; some yield more effective and sustainable results than others.

Done well, WASH development work can dramatically reduce preventable, water-borne diseases in communities in a way that can be sustained by the community over the long-term without further outside investment. Done poorly, it can leave people disempowered, disheartened, dependent, and sometimes sicker and worse off than before.

As WASH practitioners and as people supporting these efforts with financial and human resources, we need to ask the right questions and look for indicators of best practices in order to direct our efforts toward the most effective means possible.

### **Idea in Practice**

Over the past 10 years Gospel Water (a real organization but not a real name) has installed more than 10,000 hand pumps in the developing world. They rely on local pastors to identify needy communities and view water as a means of meeting people's physical needs, while opening the door for a local pastor's ministry. They have wonderful stories of community transformation that started with installing a hand pump. Gospel Water has a very good reputation within the donor community – they have a low price point, they get wells drilled within three months, and they are prompt in sending donors a folder with beautiful pictures of community members rejoicing with the water flowing in the foreground. Gospel Water's overhead rate is low, they are a member of ECFA, and they look like a fabulous investment.

After some prodding by a fellow WASH practitioner, Gospel Water conducted a survey of a random sample of their 10,000 hand pumps and they were shocked by what they found; 30% of the hand pumps were not in use and an additional 42% were in need of major repair. Even more surprising, in 40% of communities the pastor had never visited the community so there was never any chance of spiritual fruit. If only they had learned some of these things earlier many of these problems could have been fixed before they spent \$20 million.

This discussion highlights common missteps in identifying quality WASH programs and suggests ways to avoid the missteps and guide programs toward broader, deeper, and lasting impact.

- Looking at the way an organization designs its WASH programs indicates whether its resources are used for maximum impact and sustainability.

- Organizations may conduct fundraising, awareness-raising, and/or implementing activities, but all should be able to identify and utilize best practices in WASH development.
- Some practices, such as having WASH and monitoring & evaluation specialists, lead to programs that are better designed for decreasing water-related illnesses and creating lasting health improvements for communities. Regional programs also lead to more widespread and lasting change.
- Questions like “How much does it cost to install a well?” and “How much is the overhead?” are not as helpful to ascertain the effectiveness of a WASH program. Questions like “How do you partner with communities?” and “How are you measuring long-term results?” lead to better indications of the quality of WASH programs.

## WASH Organizations in Context

### The WASH Investment

Investments in providing access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene education can yield significant improvements in community health and poverty reduction. Investments in WASH offer the most significant single opportunity for change in the lives of those in extreme poverty, its effects reaching to all other activities and relationships.<sup>1</sup> “In fact, no single intervention is more likely to have a significant impact on global poverty than the provision of safe water.”<sup>2</sup> A \$1 investment in WASH yields \$3-\$34 in economic return,<sup>3</sup> but lack of WASH can cost up to 5% of a country’s GDP.<sup>4</sup> No country has developed without addressing WASH.

### Types of WASH Organizations

Organizations providing WASH services may offer either relief or development services, sometimes both. **Relief** is providing immediate assistance to prevent death and relieve suffering in response to a disaster – natural or human-made. It is doing things *for* people. **Development** is producing sustainable changes in communities that improve their overall quality of life, and it requires a significant amount of community involvement. It is doing things *with* people. This paper addresses organizations doing WASH development work, although it remains important to know if an organization is using relief or development strategies in the appropriate situations.

Furthermore, there are organizations in the WASH sector performing different roles: awareness/fundraising, implementation, and advocacy. Many combine two or more of these roles. The indicators presented here are most helpful in identifying the best implementation practices, but even those organizations advocating and fundraising for WASH efforts should be aware of current best practices.

### Fundraising/Awareness

Awareness and fundraising organizations raise funds for water projects and then channel these funds to carefully selected partners that do the actual implementation of water projects. These

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012, development economists ranked getting clean water to rural villages as *number one in greatest estimated impact* among strategies to fight global poverty. Bruce Wydick, “Cost-Effective Compassion,” *Christianity Today*, February 2012, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster-Wallace et al., *Safe Water as the Key to Global Health*, United Nations University (UNU-INWEH) (2008), 8, available at [http://inweh.unu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/SafeWater\\_Web\\_version.pdf](http://inweh.unu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/SafeWater_Web_version.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6. When operation and maintenance costs are included, a more conservative estimate is \$2-\$5.50 in return (globally) for water and sanitation investments, respectively. Guy Hutton, *Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage* (WHO: 2012), available at [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/publications/2012/globalcosts.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2012/globalcosts.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> UN Water, *The UN World Water Development Report 3: Water in a Changing World* (UN Water: 2009), 8, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/water/wwap/wwdr/wwdr3-2009>.

organizations are adept at communicating the need for access to clean water to specific audiences and they raise substantial funds from individuals, churches, businesses, and foundations. The best fundraising organizations also provide a monitoring and oversight function, requiring detailed reporting on progress and achievement, often visiting specific sites to verify effectiveness and quality of work.

In this way, fundraising organizations often help implementing agencies improve their operations. Charity: water is an example of an organization that raises funds and awareness of the need for access to clean water. There may be an instinct among donors not to give to fundraising organizations, thinking they are skipping the “middle man” by giving directly to implementing organizations, but quality fundraising organizations choose and equip quality implementing organizations and have more resources at their disposal than an individual donor to evaluate the work being done. Thus, such organizations can provide value.

### **Implementing**

Implementing organizations have their own teams and equipment that do the actual work of providing WASH services. These organizations raise funds for their own work, but they also typically implement on behalf of fundraising organizations as well. They are the boots on the ground that do the training and capacity-building among the community. They install the hardware like latrines and hand pumps or filtration systems. Lifewater International is an example of an implementing organization. In some cases, international implementing organizations find it more effective to contract services to indigenous firms in developing countries, while providing oversight through their own staff.

### **Advocacy/Coalitions**

Another set of organizations works to influence government policy and increase public funding for access to clean water while also serving to document best practices and disseminate research among member organizations. WASH Advocates is an example of an advocacy organization. This paper does not address specific indicators for evaluating advocacy organizations because their goals (and indicators of success) are different from those organizations providing WASH in communities, but these advocates should be able to articulate current best practices used among quality WASH organizations.

## **Best Practices in WASH Development**

Organizations in the WASH sector carry out their work with varying degrees of sophistication and success. In order to identify best practices in development work, many organizations look to principles developed through collaborative efforts.<sup>5</sup> These principles operate within the context of

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<sup>5</sup> See Micah Declaration on Integral Mission, *available at <http://www.micahnetwork.org/integral-mission>*; Accord Network Principles of Excellence in Integral Mission, *available at <http://www.accordnetwork.org/integral>* (updated 2014).

transformational development, or integral mission, and inform best practices for Christian development work. While the principles of integral mission specifically address the role of the global and local churches in development work, best practices for spiritual impact are outside the scope of this paper.

Accord Network's Principles of Excellence in WASH highlight the importance of: long-term service and planning; local ownership; partnership and collaboration; financial sustainability; and monitoring results.<sup>6</sup> They are built on the assumption that communities or regions lacking safe water and adequate sanitation, with discrete external inputs, have locally available solutions and resources to establish and maintain clean water sources as well as decrease preventable, water-borne disease. These principles also recognize that lasting impact takes time, both in the establishment of relationships that nurture local strengths and for evaluating the results in order to improve future strategies.

## **Essential Characteristics of Quality WASH Organizations**

The most effective WASH programs invest resources in activities that improve the reach and sustainability of their impact. Their inputs have deep and lasting results, and they can measure and demonstrate it. Moreover, Christian WASH development work invests resources into activities that promote the dignity and gifts in the community, recognizing and addressing the spiritual dimensions of poverty, especially among more vulnerable groups. The "investment portfolio" described below helps indicate whether an organization uses its resources effectively according to current best practices.

### **1) High quality WASH programs invest in people.**

Intentionally investing in people not only values the person as the customer and end user but also recognizes the critical role that people play in the long-term success of WASH interventions. While innovative and quality technologies are essential to effective and sustainable WASH, the long-term success or failure of WASH is more often determined by the human dimension and hinges on the willingness and ability of local people to own, operate, manage, maintain, and repair WASH infrastructure, and maintain standards of sanitation behavior within the community.<sup>7</sup> The most effective WASH organizations understand and practice this.

When a safe water source is established in a community, there is no guarantee that the community members are consuming safe water. Similarly, the existence of a latrine does not mean it is used properly or consistently. Engaging with the community members through training

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<sup>6</sup> Full text available at <http://wash.accordnetwork.org/wash-principles/> (approved July 2014).

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF has called a sense of ownership of WASH interventions "a necessary prerequisite for sustainability." UNICEF, *Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools: A Companion to the Child Friendly Schools Manual* (May 2009). See also Lopes and Theisohn, *Ownership, Leadership and Transformation: Can We Do Better for Capacity Development?* (New York: Earthscan & UNDP, 2003).

and promotion helps ensure interventions are successful in reducing the disease burden. Good programs invest in teaching people how to keep clean water safe all the way up to the point of consumption, and the value of keeping their environment free from human and animal waste. Even better, programs help community members discover these processes and solutions through their own experience and successfully challenge the traditional assumptions that undermine the implementation of these healthy practices.

The challenge of safe water is not primarily an engineering problem. Rather, it is a relationship problem. Most water organizations have mastered the task of installing a well or piped water system, but even the best systems will require maintenance and repair. It takes someone's leadership, time, and energy to operate and maintain water pumps, pipes, and taps, and it costs money to repair them. The community must decide who is responsible for these functions, who will pay for water and how much, who will collect the money, who will use it responsibly, and what will happen if the designated individuals do not live up to expectations.

These critical decisions and processes require governance structures, motivation, and relationships of trust and respect within the community that are not created and developed quickly, but they are worth the investment because they will determine the long-term success of the water project.

Relationships of trust and respect are even more critical in the areas of hygiene and sanitation. The health of each person in the community is affected by their neighbor's hygiene and sanitation habits. These habits are highly personal and individuals may resist change and resent the imposition of new standards. The best WASH organizations take the time to understand and adapt their approaches to different cultural and social contexts. They also take the time to develop relationships with local leaders and influencers in order to facilitate the process of behavior change, knowing that success takes months or even years of investment rather than days.

The best WASH programs also realize that this investment in a community's ability to manage its own WASH facilities and sustain sanitation standards equips them with the tools to address other areas of need such as education or a clinic or a road. In this way, a successful WASH intervention can put a community on a new trajectory.

#### Questions to ask:

*What investments are you making to mobilize and train local leaders?*

*From whom are people learning what they need to do to get water and stay healthy?*

*How do you know if your training is effective?*

*How do you adapt your programs to meet the needs of different contexts?*

## **2) High quality WASH programs invest in economic sustainability.**

It is common for organizations in development work to focus their efforts in areas of highest *need* without closely looking at *demand*. Investment in WASH will be financially sustainable when the



local community has a demand for WASH services and is willing to contribute financially towards the operation, maintenance, and repair of WASH facilities.<sup>8</sup> It is common for WASH organizations to require communities to donate land and labor as well as make commitments to contribute to future operation and repair costs.

One of the best measures of demand and ability to sustain WASH services over time, however, is whether a community is willing to contribute *cash* towards the installation of WASH facilities. The best WASH programs require significant community cash contribution up front, often in the form of a repair fund over which the community exercises control through a WASH committee.

There are several reasons why a community's financial contribution is such a significant indicator of long-term success. First, it serves as a measure of demand since people typically won't contribute to something they don't value. If people are unwilling to give now they will probably be unwilling to contribute when a repair is needed. The cash requirement eliminates low-demand communities.<sup>9</sup> Second, it verifies that there is someone in the community that community members trust with their money. A lack of trust often prevents people from contributing to a WASH fund even if they want to, and requiring a cash contribution eliminates communities that can't solve this problem. Third, it communicates to people that WASH services cost something and are not free. By contrast, giving a well for free reinforces the expectation that the water will always be free. Fourth, it gives communities a sense of ownership and "skin in the game" in WASH, giving them the right to give feedback and contribute to design decisions. Fifth, the cash contribution starts the community out with resources with which to maintain and repair their WASH infrastructure.

The best WASH programs not only require cash contribution from communities, they are also transparent with communities regarding the full life cycle costs of WASH infrastructure, including the cost of typical repairs, the amounts they should have on hand in their maintenance and repair fund, and the cost of eventual replacement of hardware such as pumps. They help communities establish transparent systems for collecting, using, and accounting for funds and connect them with repair and parts providers as well as government services. The best WASH programs also have a mechanism to periodically return and ensure that the community continues to be able to manage these tasks.

### Questions to ask:

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<sup>8</sup> See Jocelyn A. Songco, *Do Rural Infrastructure Investments Benefit the Poor?*, Policy Research Working Paper (World Bank, 2002), 21-24. Songco finds, however, that "the required minimum level of financial contributions to secure beneficiary commitment and engagement in the project is difficult to determine." (23) See also, "Importance of Cash Contribution on Sustainability of International Development Projects", Engineers Without Borders USA (July 2013), available at [https://s3.amazonaws.com/ewbgeneral/Community%20Cash%20Contribution%20-%20Summary%20Paper%20\(1\).pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/ewbgeneral/Community%20Cash%20Contribution%20-%20Summary%20Paper%20(1).pdf)

<sup>9</sup> By "eliminating" low-demand communities, organizations can focus their efforts on communities ready to practice behavioral changes needed for maximizing the health benefits of water. If the WASH organization is taking a regional approach (see #4 below), a community that was skipped over initially may be served in the future after seeing its neighbors benefit from their investment.

*What investments are you making in the long-term operation of WASH interventions?  
What proportion of the communities you serve have access to safe water and adequate sanitation five years after your programs end in the area?  
When the well breaks, how long does it take the community to fix it?  
What is the cost of the most common repair?*

### **3) High quality WASH programs invest in keeping abreast of developments in WASH.**

It is easy for WASH practitioners to get into comfortable and predictable routines that continue year upon year and fail to adapt and benefit from new initiatives and research in WASH. It is remarkable how many Christian WASH organizations do not know the high failure rates of hand pumps or that clean water alone reduces water-borne disease by less than 25%.<sup>10</sup> Many have not heard of initiatives for estimating life cycle costs of WASH services or proactive monitoring tools.

Quality WASH programs address the final goal of ending preventable, water-borne disease instead of focusing on inputs alone. The sad truth is that one third or more of clean water projects fail prematurely, some in the first few months, and many are never repaired.<sup>11</sup> Even when clean water is provided to the community, it is only a partial solution. How people transport and store their water, where they defecate, and whether they wash their hands determines whether they capture the health benefits of clean water. When combined with sanitation and hygiene, WASH can reduce deaths due to diarrheal disease by 65% or more.<sup>12</sup> If a program provides water alone - if it is not *significantly* investing in sanitation and hygiene -- it is mispending the assets aimed at preventing water-borne disease.<sup>13</sup>

Despite this knowledge, less than 10% of WASH finance is expended on rural sanitation.<sup>14</sup> Over 500 million fewer people have accessed improved sanitation in the past 25 years than have accessed safe water, and 1 in 3 people in the world still lives without improved sanitation.<sup>15</sup> In a

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<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization, *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Links to Health: Facts and Figures, Updated March 2004*, available at [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/facts2004/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/facts2004/en/).

<sup>11</sup> See a collection of several studies from various regions and countries at “*Statistics on Water Point Failures*”, Improve International, <http://improveinternational.wordpress.com/handy-resources/sad-stats/> (last updated 2014).

<sup>12</sup> WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation, *Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment (2000)*, v, available at [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/monitoring/jmp2000.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2000.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Handwashing with soap requires a \$3 investment for each Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY) Averted, while a hand pump and stand post requires a \$94 investment. Jamison et al., *Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries* (Washington: World Bank, 2006), 791.

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), *UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2014 Report: Investing in Water and Sanitation: Increasing Access, Reducing Inequalities* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2014), xi.

<sup>15</sup> WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2015 Update and MDG Assessment* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2015).

recent global survey, hygiene education and promotion made up less than 1% of nations' WASH expenditures.<sup>16</sup>

Effective WASH organizations intentionally invest in keeping abreast of and participating in the latest developments in the WASH industry. They are aware of the latest WASH research and network with other WASH organizations through forums such as the Rural Water Supply Network and the Accord WASH Alliance. Effective WASH organizations document and share their experience, attend and participate in key WASH conferences, contribute to the development of principles and standards of excellence such as the Accord Principles of Excellence in WASH, and they continually evaluate and amend their work in light of what they learn.

#### Questions to ask:

*How much is water-borne disease decreased in the communities you serve?*

*Do you have a WASH specialist or public health specialist on staff?*

*How do you stay abreast of current WASH research?*

#### 4) High quality WASH programs focus regionally.

In the past it was common for WASH programs to be driven by the number of wells and hand pumps installed within a given space of time. This led to the installation of hand pumps scattered over large areas in communities whose names came in "through the grapevine." These programs measured success by the number of hand pumps installed or through a count of "beneficiaries" whose numbers often exceeded the capacity of the hand pump, but which nevertheless looked good in donor communications. This scattered, short-term approach is unfortunately still common, particularly among faith-based groups. Such an approach makes it difficult to monitor the functioning of hand pumps, poses challenges for the supply of spare parts, makes it difficult to identify local barriers to the adoption of new hygiene and sanitation behaviors, and makes it difficult to coordinate with local leaders, local government, and other service providers who are often critical for success.

The alternative to this scattered, short-term approach is to use a longer term strategy focused on a specific geographic region. This approach has many distinct advantages that dramatically increase the potential for success.

#### Regional Disease Pathways

The pathways through which water-borne diseases are transmitted extend beyond the borders of a household or community. Water and soil are contaminated by open defecation and carried to other areas by waterways, people, animals, and flies. Unhygienic behaviors affect neighbors. A

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<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), *UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2014 Report: Investing in Water and Sanitation: Increasing Access, Reducing Inequalities* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2014), 33.

single water source in a densely populated area can become ineffective when it is used by too many people. When only one community in an area is provided with access to safe water, improved sanitation, and hygiene education, the chances of the people realizing or sustaining the full health benefits of the intervention are less than if their neighbors are able to access the same.

On the other hand, a regional strategy not only fights disease more effectively, it can maximize the return on investments. Communities that were initially resistant to change begin to see the impact of successful WASH in other communities and begin to be willing to contribute to hand pump installation and change hygiene and sanitation behaviors. This often leads to a groundswell of local demand and changed attitudes that can transform WASH in an entire region. With the scattershot approach, these communities are often neglected or are given something they are not prepared to care for.

## **Regional Actors**

A long-term presence enables the development of strong, working relationships with local government politicians who have designated development funds for their constituencies, local mechanics, spare parts providers as well as influential local leaders who can influence local attitudes and practices. It allows for engagement and coordination with local schools and churches to reinforce healthy behaviors, and it equips teachers, church leaders, and permanent members of the community to continue WASH education and promotion.

By working in the same region year after year, organizations become familiar with what works in that specific context and can adapt their approach for maximum effectiveness. In the course of conducting this year's work, staff can visit projects from previous years to monitor and follow up without having to travel large distances. These monitoring visits not only enable older projects to be successful, they inform new strategies for greater success in the future. A long-term, regional approach also allows WASH organizations to monitor the environmental impact of their work, particularly on groundwater, and to make changes that contribute to the long-term sustainability of their efforts.

### **Questions to ask:**

*How do you choose the communities you are going to help?*

*How do you use what you've learned in one community to help another?*

*Over what period of time do you remain engaged with the communities you serve?*

## **5) High quality WASH programs invest in monitoring and evaluating the work.**

A shocking percentage of WASH organizations are limited to evaluating their work through statistics of hand pumps installed, numbers of beneficiaries, and heart-warming stories from the field. Many organizations never go back to see what percentage of hand pumps are still working, whether people's hygiene and sanitation behaviors have changed, or whether people's health has improved. These impacts are simply assumed to result from the process. But the fact is, there are

many unexpected contributing factors to failure in WASH and the most effective organizations know there is no substitute for closely monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their work in each context.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) provides the opportunity to learn from successes and failures and provides the tools to adapt approaches for greater and greater impact based on an understanding of what is working and what is not as well as the reasons for failure and success. This kind of capability requires dedicated, qualified resources, and the best WASH programs have one or more people specifically assigned to M&E. In addition, monitoring and evaluation results are not primarily dedicated to telling the story to donors, but are also dedicated to giving actionable feedback to staff and beneficiaries in the field who are then tasked with devising solutions and approaches for even better outcomes. This process is critical for organizational learning that leads to effective world class work.

#### Questions to ask:

*How are you investing in evaluating the long-term impact of your programs?*

*Do you have a monitoring and evaluation specialist on staff?*

*What is one recent strategy you changed or adopted based on your evaluation results?*

*How many installed water points have communities repaired?*

## Using the Best Indicators

### The Potential for Harm

Ignoring the best practices for WASH programs is not only much less effective, it has high potential to cause real harm. It can lead to compromised effectiveness, degrade people, and establish negative expectations and attitudes in communities. If water alone is brought to the community, it will be mildly successful in preventing water-borne disease. If a WASH intervention is done without the involvement and investment from the community, it may not be used properly, and it probably will not be maintained. In communities that have safe water for a while but then lose it because the water point is contaminated or broken, going back to the old, unsafe water source can be even more harmful than it was before.

More examples of how WASH interventions can do harm if not done with the characteristics of high-quality programs listed above:

- **Undermine local government** - Providing wells for free often undermines local government efforts that require investment by a community. Installing a few wells without consulting with the local government may cause them to shift their investment elsewhere and lead to long-term neglect of the people you were trying to help as well as their neighbors.

- **Promote corruption** - Digging a well may promote corruption by enabling an official to pocket the money earmarked for that community's water source.
- **Serve as a disease reservoir** - More water access can increase household wastewater discharged into alleyways where it can fester and serve as a disease reservoir. Sometimes a leaky pump can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes that carry malaria.
- **Undermine long-term carrying capacity** - Installing a well for pastoral communities may cause them to stay longer and overgraze an area, undermining the ability of the land to support them.
- **Lead to community conflict** - Insufficient consultation on a well's location may lead to heated community conflict over the water. The people you were trying to help might be prevented from accessing the water.
- **Undermine the Christian witness** - A well installed in the courtyard of a new Christ follower may promote the perception that his profession of faith was purchased. A well installed on church property may be viewed by the local community as bait rather than a gift of love. A church leader may also be tempted to make access to the well conditional in ways that are unintended by the organization.

These examples point to the need for thoughtful engagement with communities and regional actors in WASH programs.

### Efficiency vs. Effectiveness

Some indicators are more helpful than others in evaluating the efficiency of a WASH program.<sup>17</sup> Questions about efficiency are often based on assumptions that may not be true in the WASH sector. Questions about "overhead" may be asked, but some of the activities that make WASH program work the most sustainable are housed in this category. For example, monitoring and evaluation work is sometimes considered "overhead," but these steps are necessary to measure a program's effectiveness and longevity. Putting too much weight on the "overhead" number can encourage skipping these important building blocks and lead to low-quality programs.

Price points, or comparing the cost of one output in one organization against a similar output in another organization, can be misleading. The numbers are open to manipulation that "lowers" the cost and appear more competitive among peer organizations, and costs vary considerably from context to context.

Common questions like, "*How much does it cost to put in a well?*" and "*How much does it cost to get one person water?*" may not be helpful because the costs are counted differently by each organization. Some organizations include only hardware costs; others might include sanitation

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<sup>17</sup> Some indicators point to the effectiveness of the organization in general. Among these are an organization's transparency and financial accountability as well as its proportion of investment in fundraising, administrative, and program activities. These indicators are outside the scope of this discussion, but should be kept in mind when evaluating the quality of the WASH organization as a whole.

and hygiene training costs, program administrative costs (overhead), or long-term maintenance costs. In fact, each well (and reaching different people) can have vastly different costs depending on factors like location, geology, supply chain, population density, and environmental patterns.

Another more helpful indicator might be to ask, "*What is included in the cost of serving one person or one community?*" This will point to the organization's investment in actually reducing the incidence of water-borne disease as well as the long-term sustainability of the work. It may even indicate investments that lead to greater multiplication of effort, such as training those who will train others.

When evaluating high-quality WASH organizations, the questions people ask are important. They not only help us evaluate whether the organization's work has real, lasting impact - they indicate to organizations what is important to donors. Even if an organization is not able to answer these questions, asking these questions communicates that these issues matter. Questions from donors can lead to important changes in practice.

## Questions to Ask

Indicator	Additional Questions	Less Helpful Questions
1) Investment in People	<p>Which local leaders have you found effective in changing people's attitudes towards hygiene and sanitation?</p> <p>What investments are you making to mobilize and train local leaders?</p> <p>Over what period of time is your staff in the field engaged with your beneficiary communities?</p> <p>How do you know if your training is effective?</p>	<p>How long does it take you to drill a well?</p> <p>Can I go help drill a well?</p>
2) Investment in Economic Sustainability	<p>What is the cost of the most common repair?</p> <p>What is the average amount your communities have on hand for repair and maintenance?</p> <p>What is the average amount of time between needed repairs?</p> <p>What is the average amount of time it takes for your communities to get a pump repaired?</p> <p>What kinds of contribution do you expect communities to give towards the installation of WASH facilities?</p>	<p>How much does it cost to drill a well?</p>
3) Investment in WASH Developments	<p>Do you have someone on staff with expertise and field experience in hygiene and sanitation or public health?</p> <p>What conferences do your staff attend?</p> <p>Has your staff presented their work in WASH forums or conferences?</p> <p>How do you stay abreast of current WASH research?</p>	
4) Investment in Region	<p>How do you decide where to make your WASH investments?</p> <p>Over what period of time do you work with a community (look for months and years rather than days)?</p> <p>How do you use what you have learned in one community to help another?</p>	<p>How many beneficiaries did you have this year?</p>
5) Investment in M&E	<p>What percentage of the wells are still functioning? How do you assess the effectiveness of your hygiene and sanitation efforts?</p> <p>How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your work?</p> <p>Who among your staff is responsible for monitoring and evaluating your work in the field?</p> <p>What strategies have you changed or adopted as a result of evaluations?</p> <p>Have you ever had an external evaluation done of your work?</p>	<p>How many wells did you drill this year?</p>