Lessons Learned: a Community Engagement Approach in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia

The hidden challenges that affect the success of initiatives to promote community health and well-being
Objectives

Participants will:

• Understand five basic hidden challenges that have hindered the adoption of innovations in agricultural and water use practices that are essential to health and well-being in Ethiopia and other developing countries.

• Examine the lessons learned through this community engagement initiative that serves both as a strategy for successful and sustained adoption of agricultural and water use practices and promotion of mental and physical well-being. Examples demonstrating the impact of this approach will be provided.

• Engage in discussion and role play to learn how the techniques in this model have successfully facilitated the transfer of knowledge; fostered pride in community problem solving; and aligned infrastructure development, community engagement and cultural values and traditions.
Outline

- Welcome and introductions-
- Overview: current issues related to agricultural and water use practices in Ethiopia; need for adoption of new innovations and the link to health and well-being
- Challenges to adoption of agricultural and water use innovations in the Amharic Region
- Opportunities: enhancing community well-being and sustaining implementation of community health innovations
- Lessons learned: Applying a Community Engagement approach
- Linking well-being and health outcomes to the Ethiopian Water Use Project
- Q&A/Discussion
- Wrap up
The Need for Ethiopian Irrigation Project

• Ethiopia has a farming community of more than 90% of the population. Production of food and access to clean water is challenged by flooding and severe drought conditions.

• Technical solutions are largely available and hold promise for substantial change that can potentially result in significant health benefits across social, economic, physical and mental health areas.

• Synergy among the farming community is critically important in bringing change for positive well-being, fighting poverty, malnutrition and disease including depression, anxiety and other mental health problems.
The Need for the Ethiopian Irrigation Project cont.

- The Ethiopian Irrigation Project uses role play demonstrations to engage communities in understanding and adoption of technical and adaptive change that will enhance the well-being of the community overall.
- The values of coordination, planning together, equity and inclusiveness, and unity for collective development are integrated throughout the project activities. They are extremely effective tools to connect to the community.
- The Project brings on board the entire farming community and ensures that everyone is valued and has a role.
- The fostering of inclusion, engagement, social connectedness and shared leadership shows significant short term outcomes for well-being across a number of domains.
Opportunities

- **Water availability**
- **Land** (slope, soil type)
- **Support** from donors and government = PASIDP, AGP,...
  - Video: IFAD – PASIDP in Amhara from where to where
- **Decisive factor**: Potential for **social capital** among leaders, experts and communities
  - Innovation and creativity
  - Good working culture
  - Labor of gender and age groups
Overview: Selected Issues related to Poverty and Health

• Traditional practice predominates and is a factor contributing to extreme poverty and poor sanitation and health conditions...

• Need for adoption of new innovations to address poverty through to agricultural and water use practices in Ethiopia.

• Need to understand the link between agricultural and water use practices and overall health and well-being
Interwoven Challenges

- Ethiopian initiatives face difficulty in promoting mental health and preventing mental health challenges given the high need to fight poverty and boost availability of clean domestic water.
Successes: Ethiopia to well-being through the Irrigation project:

- The project was effective and efficient. In about one year we were engaged in these communities, were able to see the short term results.

- Levers included increase in positive communication with communities; improved information and education about water use, increased access to communities including use of road construction; use of innovative problem solving methods to overcome challenges; exploration of non-traditional concepts and experiences to boost knowledge, understanding and application/use of the approach.

- These also have the added benefits of enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of implementation efforts for these agricultural and water use methods.
Irrigation in Amhara-BodyPartsCode

Lessons learned

• Farmers and water users can learn to work together to achieve shared benefits. Tools such as role plays and other participatory methods can be used effectively to facilitate collaboration,

• Up-scaling the process of strengthening community engagement to each project area is needed, with intensive and continuous facilitated trainings,

• Increased community engagement provides the base for future collective activity important for livelihood development and resilience,

• Articulated conferences help farmers to motivate, think differently, collectively, meet challenges and become innovative,

• To fight poverty and thereby achieve full well-being level we need to upgrade the innovation capacity of communities in Amhara and the country at large.
Why the Ethiopian Water Use project?

• Change in water use and agricultural practices will result in improved food production and access to nutrition for health and well-being
• Reduction in flooding and droughts
• Increased availability of clean water for domestic use and sanitation
• Community engagement is key to effective implementation and sustainability and promotes community health and well-being
• Engagement of community leaders is essential to adaptation and acceptance of new innovations and practices. Adoption of innovations requires changes and abandonment of old and unhelpful ways and creates opportunities for new approaches that will improve health and well-being.
5 Major Challenges:

- **Lack of vision:** limits progress in country wide development and ability to poverty through broad strategies including agricultural and water use challenges.

- **Need for Policy Development and Enforcement:** No direct policy and strategy in place to address the ongoing agricultural and water use challenges and inconsistent or poor enforcement systems.

- **Lack of knowledge transfer mechanisms:** Demand exceeds resources: for instance for farmers need assistance in the day-to-day activities of agricultural and water use management; resource restoration; strategies to enhance health status and tools to guide the development of high agricultural production, value of compliance with environmental needs and importance of engagement across the whole community.

- **Lack of infrastructure:** lack of essential public health infrastructure; lack of infrastructure to support expansion of culturally appropriate knowledge/skill development practices at all levels i.e. individual, household and district levels. Lack of infrastructure to develop and expand essential foundations that support engagement of leaders and communities to enhance community development and well-being;

- **Political corruption:** corruption and punitive policies and practices interfere with community engagement and well-being.
Types of Challenges

Technical challenges
- Those that can be solved by the knowledge of experts. These elements come into play when the problem definition, solution and plan implementation are clear.
- For example, research identifies early warning signs for academic failure. The technical challenge can be met by sharing the information with educators and implementing the strategies.

Adaptive challenges
- Require New Learning
- No clear cut problem definition and solution
- Require experimentation, discover and/or adjustment to past practices
- About the human elements of change; values and beliefs, relationship and buy-in or lack of
- Asks people to think differently, act differently and believe differently;
- Success rate is often less than if the solution relies on technical elements alone
- For example, in the above situation, the technical information is necessary but not sufficient. Adaptive strategies also are needed to address behavior changes in both staff and students.

Challenges commonly reflected by community participants were how to...

- Understand the real challenges at all levels?
- Develop the best strategies to address those challenges?
- Convince leaders to use new approaches that will improve well-being?
- Develop and sustain appropriate infrastructure to facilitate new ways of working?
- Facilitate practical linkages to the marketplace?
- Facilitate ownership and efficient management systems?
- Facilitate effective operations & maintenance efforts?
- Ensure efficient water use?
- Facilitate effective platforms for ongoing innovations?
- Facilitate effective farmer to farmer communications and sharing?
Adaptive challenges

- How to start initiating change?
  - Change the mentality or “mindset” of leaders at all levels - regarding utilization of scientific procedures?
  - Change the mentality and “mindset” of farmers for better actions resulting in mental and physical health and fitness to work?

- How to agree upon alternative ways of doing business?

- How to arrive at key decisions for experimentation on options around technical and organizational issues?

- How to start sharing experiences?

- How to motivate reflection at all levels for further learning and sharing?
Water Users Critical Technical challenges

• How to facilitate functional market linkages?
  ▫ Improving market linkages?
  ▫ Improving input supply?

• How to facilitate ownership and efficient management systems?
  ▫ Facilitating inclusivity among water users/WUA members?
  ▫ Formation of inclusive WUAs?
  ▫ Creating a common understanding among members?

• How to facilitate effective Operation & Maintenance of irrigation projects for efficient water use?
  ▫ Improving irrigation water supply?
  ▫ Maintaining the scheme?

• How to facilitate effective innovation platforms?
  ▫ Forming responsive stakeholders?
  ▫ Solving problems of disease infestation?

• How to facilitate effective farmer to farmer sharing?
  ▫ Filling the knowledge gap between farmers?
  ▫ Improving experiences of sharing and training?
Irrigation in Amhara RiverCode

http://www.thewaterchannel.tv/media-gallery/5777-irrigation-in-amhara-rivercode
Linking the Ethiopian Irrigation Project to Foundations for overall Community Health:

- Physical well-being
- Economic well-being
- Social well-being
- Development and activity
- Emotional well-being
- Psychological well-being
- Life satisfaction
- Domain specific satisfaction
- Engaging activities and work.

Reference for bulleted list re well-being: http://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm
World Health Organization: Definition of Mental Health

• “Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual can realize his or her own abilities, interact positively with others, cope with the stressors of life and study, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to his or her family and community.”
  ▫ the definition does not refer exclusively to the absence of “mental illness”, but also addresses the concept of “mental wellness”.
  ▫ According to WHO “There is no health without mental health.”
Ethiopia and Mental Health

- Urbanization has steadily increased since 1950 (U.N., 2003). However, less than 20% of the population live in urban areas (C.I.A., 2013).

- Ethiopia’s mental health policy includes access to care throughout the country (WHO, 2005).

- Resources and access to formal care tend to be centralized in the urban capital, Addis Ababa.
Mental Health in Ethiopia

- Global mental health research has shown that traditionally, rural residents tend to lean toward spiritual understandings of mental illness, while urban residents may gravitate to medical explanations and treatments (Bouhlel et al., 2012; Kishore, Gupta, Jilona & Bantman, 2011).
- Are these differences the same in Ethiopia? Some evidence indicates that they are.
- Appears to be a need to develop a holistic and inclusive approach to psycho-education and treatment approach.
- Need to acknowledge larger environmental and economic contributors

http://www.academia.edu/2906836/Urban_and_rural_perceptions_of_mental_illness_in_Ethiopia
Community Well-being Requires:

- Social determinants of Health (WHO)
  - the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.
Social Determinants of Mental Health

Examining elements of social structure that are most closely shown to affect mental health and illness? Considering the link with agricultural and water use practices. Cultural relevance?

- Income Inequality
- Food Security
- Housing Quality
- Social Status
- Neighborhood Conditions
- Employment Opportunity
- Discrimination
- Cultural Norms
- Social Exclusion
- Political Marginalization
- Physical Isolation
- Public Service Systems

Based upon the Adler School’s Institute on Social Exclusion Social Determinants of Mental Health
Well-being integrates:

- Well-being encompasses physical, mental, and social domains.
- Countries differ substantially in their levels of well-being.
- Societies with higher well-being are those that are more economically developed, have effective governments with low levels of corruption, have high levels of trust, and can meet citizens’ basic needs for food and health.
- Cultural factors (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, social norms) also play a role in national estimates of well-being.
- Positive mental health, well-being and flourishing refer to the presence of high levels of positive functioning—primarily in the mental health domain (inclusive of social health).

http://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm
What is Well-being?

• Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well.

• Good living conditions (e.g., housing, employment) are fundamental to well-being. Tracking these conditions is important for public policy. However, many indicators that measure living conditions fail to measure what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions and resilience, the realization of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life—i.e., their “well-being.”¹, ²

• Well-being generally includes global judgments of life satisfaction and feelings ranging from depression to joy.

http://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm
How is Well-being defined?

In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good. For public health purposes, physical well-being (e.g., feeling very healthy and full of energy) is also viewed as critical to overall well-being.

http://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm
Social connectedness is a key to positive health including mental health.

- Social connectedness is one of many terms used to describe the complex relationships both between individuals and among groups. Other terms include: social capital, social support, community connectedness, social cohesion, and social integration.

- People low in social connection are more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, antisocial behavioral and even suicidal behaviors which tend to further increase their isolation. Lack of social connectedness predicts vulnerability to disease and death beyond traditional risk factors associated with well-being.


Leading by Convening

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Leadership Design: Top Down, Bottom Up or Both

The Partnership Way

Leading by Convening

**Leading by Convening** means we:

- Meet people where they are on the issue.
- Bring people together to build support for addressing the issue.
- Convene the stakeholders to discover why this is important and how it will improve practice.
- Translate complex challenges into ways that individuals can contribute.
- Help people lead in place regardless of role, position or title.
- Create new knowledge together.
- Solve complex issues that need the various perspectives/aspects that contribute to problems/solutions.
- Build a personal commitment to working in this way because we believe inclusive work is better and more sustainable work.
- Cultivate the habit of collaboration.
- Integrate collaboration into the identity of the group and the individual.

**Leading by Convening** becomes a reality when we routinely:

- Coalesce Around Issues.
- Ensure Relevant Participation.
- Do the Work Together.

*This is The Partnership Way!*
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Questions and Discussion
Resources

• Ethiopia’s National Mental Health Strategy (2012/13- 2015/16) Federal Ministry of Health

• The prevalence of depression and associated factors in Ethiopia: findings from the National Health Survey
  • Http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3511231/


UNESCO Interview Mastewal Ejigu Ademe:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbkkuccN-w8

Mr Ademe from Ethiopia studied Water Resources Management at UNESCO-IHE, he graduated in 2007. He worked as a regional coordinator of a participatory small scale irrigation development programme in Ethiopia. Mr Ademe returned to the Netherlands to attend a conference in the Hague, at UNESCO-IHE he talks about his activities in the field of irrigation and water management.


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