

WOBA Cambodia Partnership Structure

Lessons learned from the Mid-term Review of WOBA Cambodia

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Project Background

The Women-Led Output-Based Aid (WOBA) Cambodia is an AU\$ 3.2 million projects, funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Water for Women Fund over 4.5 years (June 2018 to December 2022). Designed and implemented by Thrive Networks/East Meets West Foundation, WOBA aims to improve health and gender equality for low-income and vulnerable households in Cambodia through sustainable and inclusive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). It sets out an ambitious agenda to achieve improved access to sanitation for 15,000 poor and 15,000 non-poor households, as well as to piped water for 3,750 poor households. WOBA's key strategic priorities are:

- Partnering with local governments, Committees of Women and Children (CCWC), and private sector WASH operators to strengthen coordination mechanisms to deliver WASH services for poor and GESI households.
- Building capacity of government partners, members of CCWC, female village volunteers, and private sector WASH operators to implement output-based aid (OBA) scheme to provide poor and GESI households access to sanitation and clean water.
- Mainstreaming the gender, disability, and socially inclusive approach in WASH delivery.

A Mid-term Review (MTR) of WOBA was conducted over a five-month period from March to July 2021 by an evaluation team comprise of a Team Leader (Dr Lien Pham, Thrive's Director of Research and Evaluation) and a national consultant.

The MTR collected data from a variety of sources including: 1) Desktop review of policies and guidelines on rural WASH in Cambodia; 2) Four focus group discussion (FDG) – one national and three provincial levels; 3) Surveys of the 32 FDG participants; 4) Semi-structured interviews with 21 CCWC members; 5) Semi-structured interviews with WOBA beneficiaries. Field visits were conducted in Prey Veng, Kratie and Pursat to conduct the focus groups and interviews.

One of the MTR's objectives is to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of partnership structure in WOBA – the first two strategic priorities. This learning note is drawn from the MTR findings about the partnership structure, the lessons learned and implications for the remaining period of WOBA.

WOBA's partnership structure

WOBA's partnership structure follows the government structure with the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) at national level through the Department of Rural Health Care (DORHC), and at sub-national level through the Provincial Departments of Rural Development (PDRDs). MRD is the

central ministry responsible for implementing National Action Plan (NAP) II which sets out a vision of achieving “sustained access to safe water supply and sanitation services, and lives in a hygienic environment by 2025 [by rural communities]”. Thus, engaging with the MRD and establishing partnership structure along the vertical government structure from the national down to the village level is WOBA’s strategic priority to achieve sanitation and water targets. Activities conducted by WOBA partners in this structure include collecting base line data to identify target beneficiaries (ID poor and GESI); educating village chiefs and leaders to mobilise them to take part in WOBA; mobilising households to take up latrine and water connections; training and monitoring sanitation and water

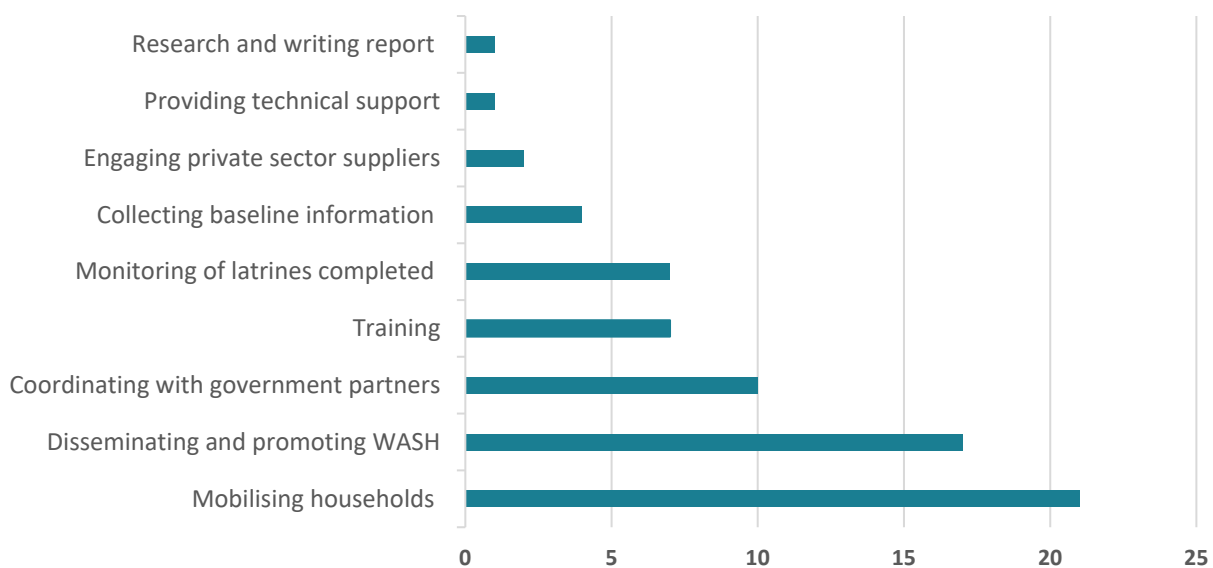


Figure 1. Main activities in WOBA partnership (based on survey of FGD participants)

connections for OBA payment; disseminating other WASH-related information and coordinating with each other and other government agencies. Fig 1 shows the main activities of the focus group participants as indicated in their survey responses

These activities are carried out within the partnership structure of each province. As shown in Figure 2, local level connections in Katie have been made between beneficiaries, village focal persons, and the CCWC to collect base line data of eligible households for latrine construction. This data is sent to the PDRD who later connect with local masons to build the latrines. They also work together to provide training to the villagers on sanitation, hygiene, and clean water. The PDRD’s role in the training component involves occasional visits to support CCWC in their awareness raising activities. The PDRD also directly connects to households who completed latrines to make subsidy payments. The connection between PDRD and MRD/DHRC appears to be occasional in which the latter sometimes visit the former and conduct joint event with the CCWC at the commune level. The PDRD also reports latrine completion to EMW and MRD/DHRC.

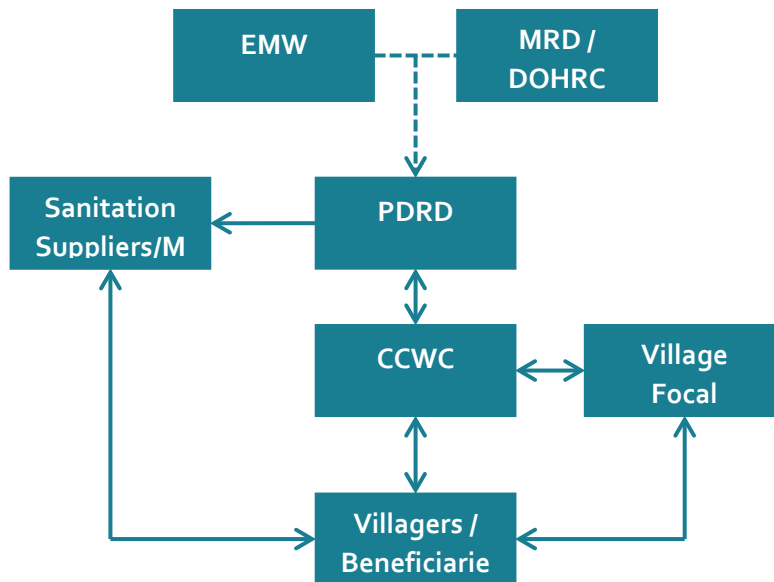


Figure 2. Partnership structure in Kratie (sanitation)

In Prey Veng, the DoRD has been the key agency in charge of WOBA’s operation. As shown in Figure 3, the DoRD collects money from commune offices where the CCWC members are working and liaise directly with the local masons to organise latrine construction for the beneficiaries. The DORD raises and collects donations from Buddhist temples and village leaders to pay the masons the cost of building latrines. The operational links between DoRD, PDRD, MRD under the WOBA project are unclear. EMW appears to be operating at the same national level as with Kratie. Similarly, the DoRD could be presumed to have the role of reporting data and coordinated occasional visits by PDRD and MRD. This is different to Kratie where the PDRD has an operational authority in the WOBA partnership structure and implementation processes.

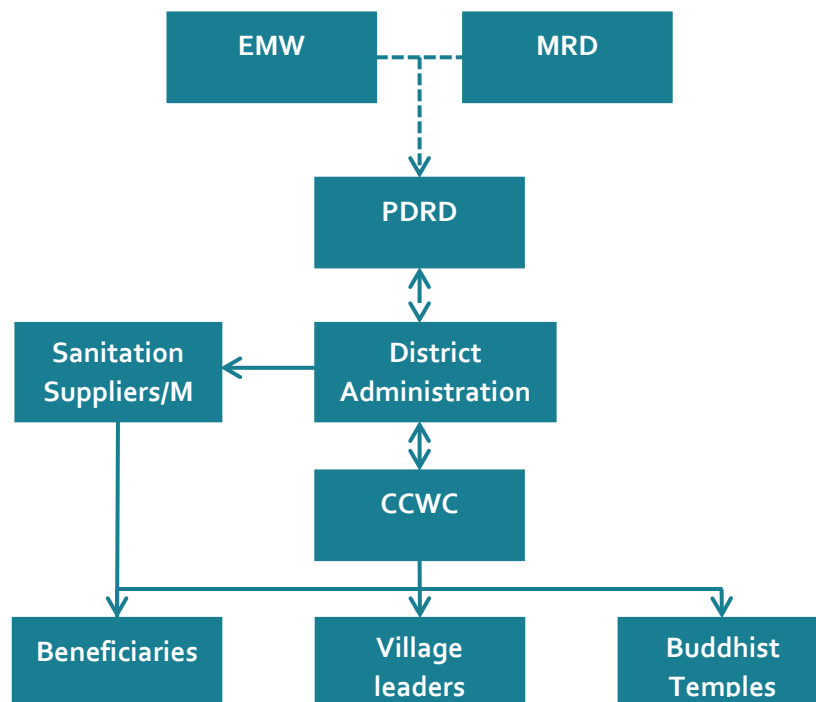


Figure 3. Partnership structure in Prey Veng (sanitation)

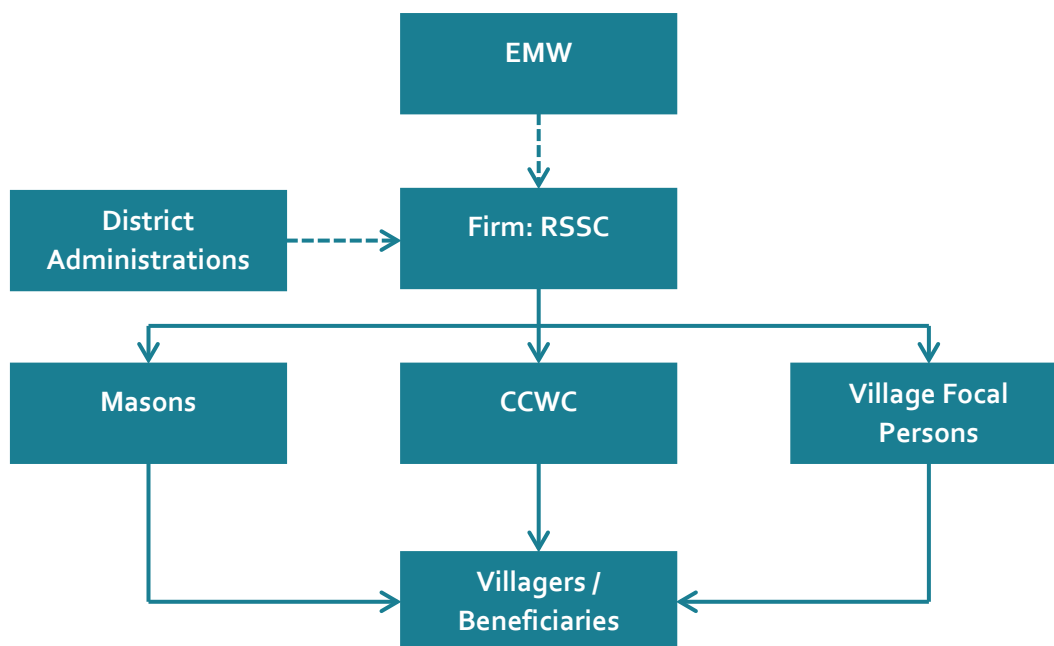


Figure 4. Partnership structure in Pursat (sanitation)

In Pursat, the partnership networks appear to be more horizontal rather than vertical structure of government (Figure 4). The private company “Rural Sanitation Clean Company” (RSCC) seems to have the main role in the WOBA implementation, and connects with the CCWC, local masons, and villagers in implementing activities such as awareness-raising and delivering latrines to beneficiaries for constructions. From a regulation perspective, the RSCC must receive authorisation from the District Administration; however, this was not confirmed by FGD participants or the RSCC representative in Pursat.

The operational structure varies across these three provinces in terms of partner’s decision making, which may reflect the partner’s experiences and relationships with EMW in previous projects. In areas which EMW has not applied the OBA model in previous projects, the focus of the partnership is on how to implement OBA model. For example, in Kratie, the PDRD is at the helm of the implementation and the OBA payment process aligns with WOBA’s procedures, whereas in Prey Veng and Pursat, the DA/DoRD or the RSCC have more decision making.

In WOBA’s water component, the Cambodian Water Supply Association (CWA) has the main role in the implementation. The CWA is responsible for collecting baseline data of households with existing water connections in the service areas of the water schemes that are involved in WOBA. They also provide capacity building to the water supply operators and conduct verification of water connections of subsidy to the water supply operators. The water supply operators connect with villagers and inform them about WOBA subsidy scheme for ID poor 1 & 2; and conduct occasional meetings with local authorities seeking support in disseminating broader information about rural water supply to the communities.

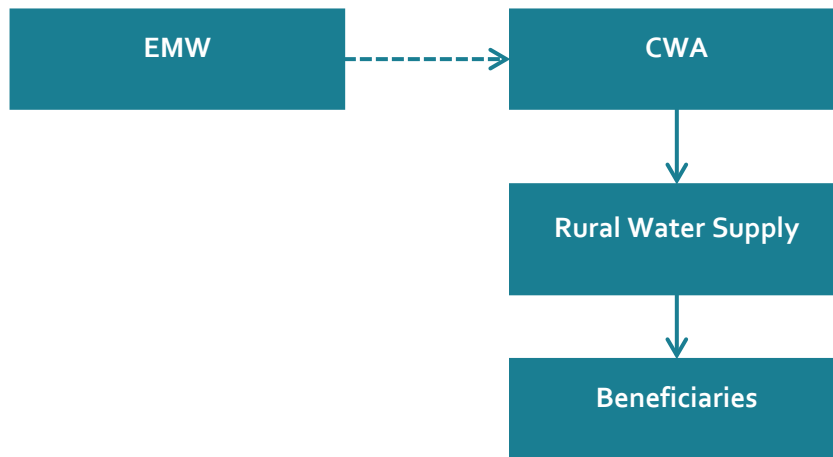


Figure 5. Partnership structure of the water component

Effectiveness of WOBA’s partnership structure

Although there are differences between provinces in terms of the partnership structure and line of authority in charge of implementation activities, there is a common link between the national and subnational levels. The overall WOBA partnership structure provides partners with the role and position within a hierarchical governance structure that they are familiar with. In addition, because WOBA offers the same types of latrines across all provinces, leveraging the existing government structure works well in terms of legitimacy and sharing information down the chains of authority. Except for some gaps in information provided due to staff turnover in the CCWC, this partnership structure is appropriate for WOBA at a project level, as well as for the MRD at the government level, to achieve sanitation and water targets. This was noted by a representative from MRD in the focus group discussion,

“Our [WOBA] project established structure from MRD, PDRD, DORD, commune, and to village is very important. It encourages our team to work and attain the 2025 national action plan to reach 100% of sanitation and hygiene coverage.”

The partnership structure also provides an easy connection and cooperation with the focal points in different levels, as noted by a private sanitation supplier,

“The structure of operation is significant. It provides a way of cooperation and connection better with focal persons from PDRD, communes, villages, commune and development partners. Before we did not have time much to know each other. It was dispersed, but this project we can help us to work together collaborative.”

The CCWC has an important role as the mobilisers in WOBA’s implementation activities. The approach to selecting CCWC staff to mobilise households varies across the three partnership structures. In

Kratie, the PDRD connects and recruits the CCWC members to be part of the project. The PDRD also confirms the project to the commune chiefs who help to select the CCWC members as the project’s commune focal persons. In Prey Veng, the DoRD recruits the CCWC to be the commune focal persons. Since many CCWC commune focal persons have already been engaged by other development agencies such as IDE and Santisana that conduct WASH activities, the DoRD tends to recruit these CCWC members to take part in WOBA. The DoRD connects with the commune chiefs who formalise the CCWC members’ appointment at the commune level. In Pursat, the RSSC recruits the CCWC members. Similar to Prey Veng, they often recruit those who were already acting as focal persons in other WASH projects and connects to commune chiefs to assign the roles and responsibilities to the CCWC.

Interviews with the CCWC members reveal that this approach works well because the CCWC members were already assigned by the commune chiefs to be key focal persons for WASH, thus WOBA effectively leverages the local government’s system. All CCWC members interviewed felt that WASH has become a key part of their roles and responsibilities in addition to the core function of providing support for issues of women and children.

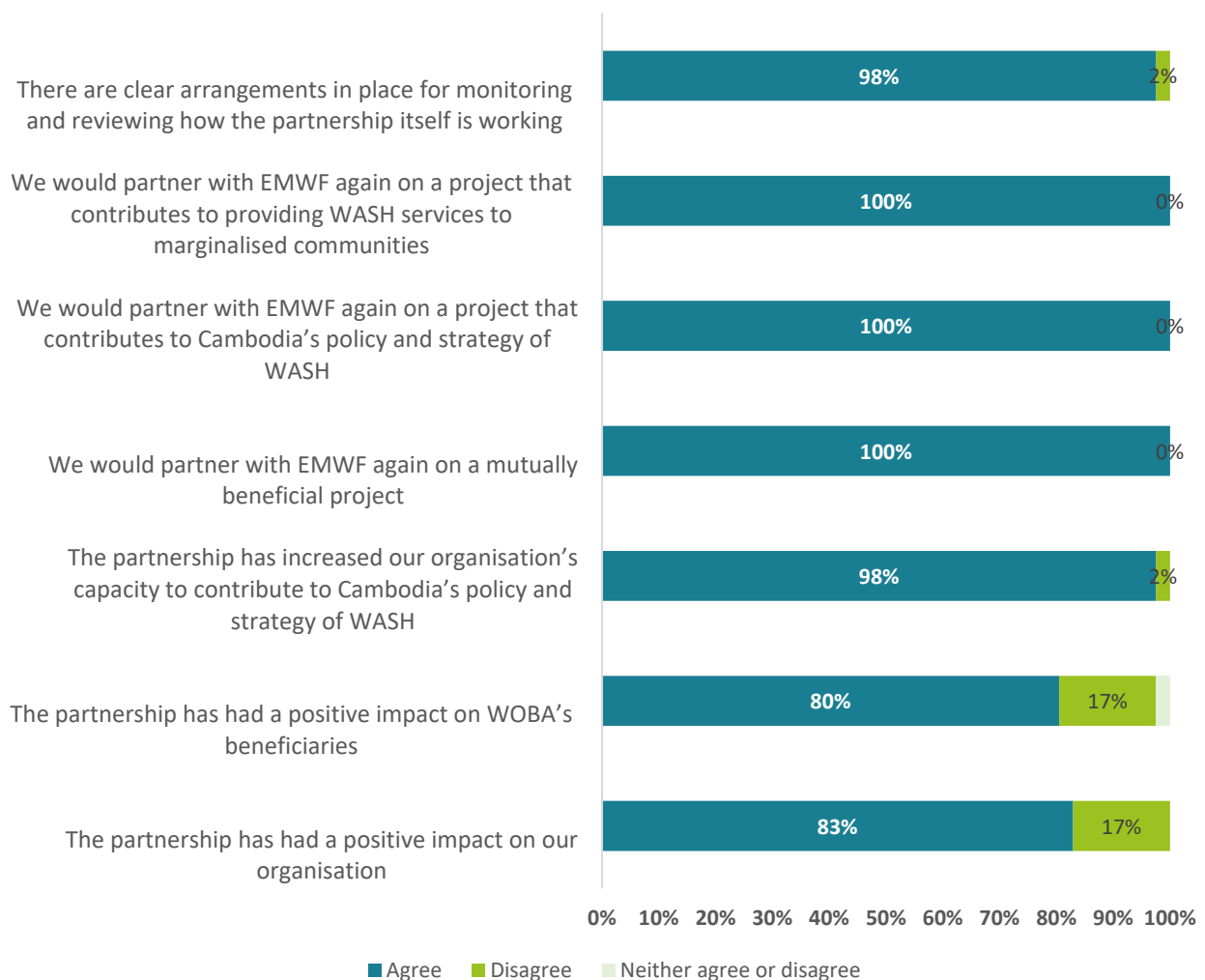


Figure 6. Survey responses to the “Nature of partnership with WOBA”

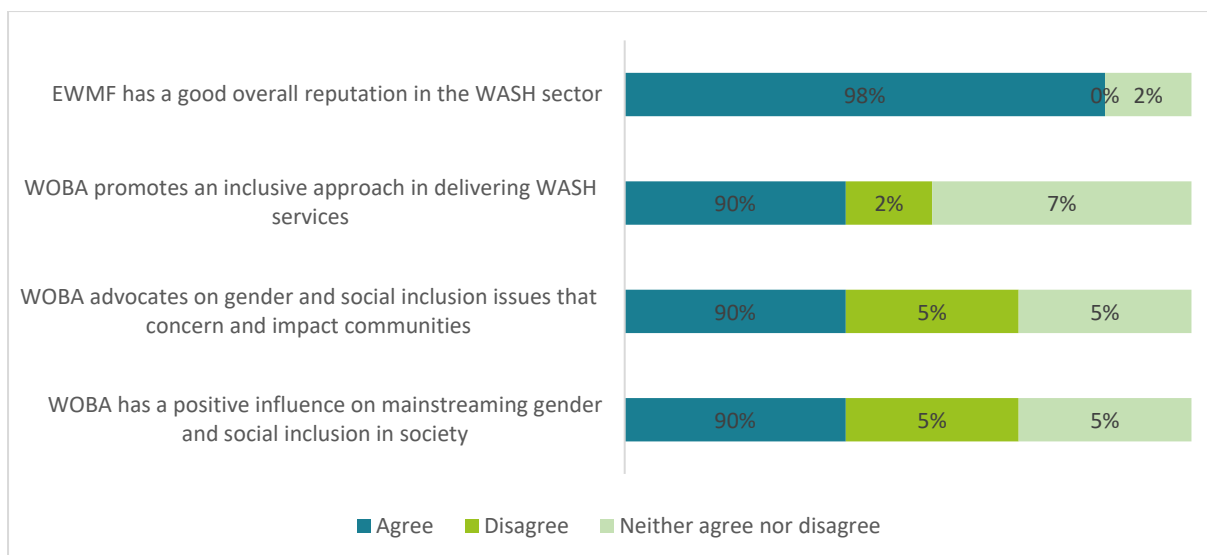


Figure 7. Survey responses to the “Outcomes of partnership with WOBA”

Engaging with partners

Table 1 summarises the FGD participants’ survey responses (n=32) in relation to their organisation’s activities in WOBA on a scale of 1 to 10. Generally, the involvements tend to be at the higher end with scores of 8 and above for engagement, level of interaction, scope of activities, strategic value and importance of partner organization to the WOBA structure. The partnership appears to be “simple” reflecting the purpose of delivering WASH targets and following existing vertical structure of governance.

Based on the survey result and focus group discussions, the WOBA partnership structure can be said to effectively promote partners’ engagement in the project and enable learning and sharing of implementation experiences from different aspects of the project as well as from different backgrounds and capacity. This is evidenced by a nearly universal stakeholders’ agreement on clear arrangements which allows “monitoring and reviewing how the partnership itself is working”, and on willingness to again enter formal partnership with EMW.

Partners in the focus groups felt that they could join the meeting and share their concerns and issues to address. In a statement from the district representative from Prey Veng,

“In general meetings at commune councils, the district council can integrate WASH issues including discussing the challenges of addressing ID poor communities. In some cases, if any challenges are not solved at commune level, they are referred to district meetings, where the chief of district council, district or deputy of district governor can discuss to solve the issues and make a joined decision.”

Another FG participant felt that the structure allowed for engagement and supporting private sector operators,

“The PDRD helps to set the cost of latrine for private latrine suppliers. PDRD supports private sectors in technical knowledge about latrine construction.”

Interviews with the private sector operators and CCWC highlights an over-emphasis on technical knowledge in trainings – e.g knowledge on hygienic latrine construction, as noted by private sector operators, rather than business skills in management and finance which could have helped improve their viability and sustainability in less profitable areas.

Table 1. Involvement with WOBA partnership structure

	Respondent's Score									
Level of partner's engagement with WOBA (1=low, 10=high)	3%			3%	3%	8%	11%	33%	25%	14%
Importance of partner organisation to WOBA (1=peripheral, 10=central)				3%	3%	8%	3%	31%	33%	22%
Value of resources partner received from WOBA (1=low, 10=high)				3%	8%		11%	28%	36%	17%
Scope of partner's activities in WOBA (1=narrow, 10=broad)				3%	3%		8%	47%	25%	17%
Level of interaction between partner and WOBA (1=infrequent, 10=intensive)				6%	11%	8%	8%	36%	17%	17%
Level of complexity of partnership with WOBA (1=simple, 10=complex)	17%	14%	11%	8%	19%		6%	14%	3%	11%
Strategic value of partnership with WOBA for partner (1=minor, 10=major)				3%		8%	8%	22%	39%	22%

The WOBA partnership structure seems to enable learning and sharing of implementation experiences from different aspects of the project as well as from different backgrounds and capacity. A CCWC member in the focus group at Kratie noted,

“The collaboration embedded in the structure forms diverse learning experiences to help us to continue implementing the work-plan. Different experiences from agency such as PDRD can help us to gain knowledge from them and to ensure project implements smoothly. Working in team also helps us to establish a good planning with a clear objective to attain the goal.”

Another participant in the same focus group explained,

“When developing the work-plan together as a team, it helps to know from where to start and reflect where we are reaching the goal. Joined plan also helps us to change behaviour and easily manage project—including data of achievement.”

Other FG participants pointed out,

“I learn and know reasons why we need to build latrines and understand the need of poor.”

“Something I have learnt is a way to encourage people construction latrine.”

The CCWC interviewees appreciated the trainings they received which helped to improve their capacity to manage and take the lead of the WASH’s initiatives in the communities to address the needs of the poor/GESI. The CWCC was exposed to learning about menstrual hygiene management (MHM), sanitation, hygiene, clean water, and clean surrounding, as well as food and nutrition. Other CCWC interviewees learned technical aspects of installing latrine such as length and height of latrine ring and brick to insert technically, which enabled them to be able to monitor the quality of latrines. Using maps to record households with and without latrine was also among the topics in the training provided in the project. Some CCWC also learned facilitation and coordination skills including workplan development and report writing. However, the majority of the CCWC interviewed also felt that they had already acquired knowledge and skills on WASH from EMW’s previous projects or from their involvement with other development partners’ activities in the local area. Only a few CCWC members said that they needed more skills training in facilitation, WASH and gender aspects for future WASH interventions. What seems to be the additional value of WOBA for these CCWC members is their recognition of the significant needs of the poor and GESI communities. In some cases, they have opted to give their performance incentives from EMW to the beneficiaries to help towards paying the latrine costs.

Limitations of partnership structure

Following the governance structure results in linkages between partners that typify one-way information flow and decision-making. The cooperation between organisations serves the shared view among partners that the partnership structure’s aim is achieving latrines and water connections targets using a subsidy scheme rather than achieving the project’s outcomes of system strengthening, gender equality and women’s empowerment at the sector and household domains, and creating and translation of evidence for knowledge sharing.

The WOBA partnership structure has the potential for multi-stakeholder partnerships that involve government agencies, businesses, and NGOs to deliver WASH solutions, which should align well with NAP II's call for concerted technical coordination. However, it would need a different kind of design and activities if it wants to pursue this aim.

If one of the aims of the partnership structure is to improve capacities of partners, base line data about partners' knowledge, awareness or skills in WASH pre-WOBA should be collected together with ongoing assessment and partner feedback of training provided through the partnership. Without these data, it not possible to assess how WOBA has improved capacities of partners or addressed their training needs.

There is little evidence to demonstrate that WOBA has made an explicit effort to improve the visibility of OBA funding scheme and private sector engagement at the policy level. If the expected outcomes of WOBA is to influence relevant ministries at national level, encouraging them to secure government budget for the poor/marginalised to access WASH, more work is needed in terms of ministerial engagement to facilitate national dialogue on private sector engagement and government co-funding. The WOBA partnership structure is the appropriate mechanism for such policy advocacy activities. It would need concerted effort in design and implementation, as well as M&E processes to be built in partnership structure.

Ways forward

Based on these learnings from the MTR as presented above, the following actions are recommended for the remaining period of the project:

- Continue to engage with the partners institutions with the explicit intention and action plans to contributing to institutional, individual and system changes. This could involve planning and agreeing on indicators of change to be tracked and reported by partners and synthesised by EMW and feedback to partners. The NAP II indicators should be used as a starting point.
- Develop resources and deliver training on climate change, adaptation measures in sanitation and water supply to all partners. The training content should be developed by climate change experts in consultation with EMW.
- Revise and deliver training to private sector operators on business skills, financial literacy and financial management. The content should be provided by business experts in WASH and incorporate practical assessment of business knowledge acquired.

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