

# Capturing Impact: Monitoring and Evaluating a Sanitation Program in Ethiopia

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As a student in the Masters in Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program, I had the opportunity this past summer to complete my field practicum in southern Ethiopia. While there, I partnered with Water Is Life International, a nongovernmental organization that provides access to safe and sufficient water sources, and also provides sanitation education and training to community members. Water and sanitation are crucial elements of development initiatives globally, and are key areas that can bring transformation to the lives of people worldwide.

My project this summer was to conduct an evaluation of part of Water Is Life's program in Ethiopia, and to begin the process of institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation within the organization's structure and culture. Water Is Life utilizes sustainable livelihood groups (SLGs) as a mechanism to transfer sanitation knowledge and training to women living in the communities in which they work. SLGs are based on the model of self help groups, and are generally composed of 15 to 20 women who meet weekly to save money together, discuss their lives, and present new ideas to each other. SLGs have been found to increase individual women's levels of self-efficacy, and give women a strong belief in their own agency. Water Is Life aims to use SLGs as an avenue to affect positive sanitation behavior change in the lives of individual women.

It is important to understand the local context in order to appreciate the need for further sanitation interventions. Sanitation, specifically the idea of handwashing with soap, is not a new concept in this area. From focus group discussions and conversations with community members that I had, it is obvious that the knowledge is present, and that community members have received the message of the importance of good



sanitation behaviors. Local health workers have visited the communities, and public service announcements are often shown on the television stressing the importance of these behaviors. And yet, there is an obvious lack of action and adoption of sanitation behaviors. The hope is that by introducing sanitation education through the social structure of SLGs, the change in women's self-efficacy and agency will spill over into the area of sanitation, motivating them to actually change their behaviors.

For my evaluation I conducted four focus groups with members of SLGs, and also administered over one hundred surveys to both SLG members and non-members. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to understand the impact of SLGs on the lives' of the members, to assess the amount of sanitation knowledge that individuals had, and also to identify the barriers to sanitation behavior change. The surveys drew a comparison between members and non-members, identifying key behaviors and barriers and linking the relationship between them.

Preliminary analysis from the focus groups and surveys shows that members of SLGs benefit from membership by receiving increased levels of social support, greater mobility outside of their homes, and also increased levels of self-efficacy; all of which will support positive sanitation behaviors. As I continue my analysis of the data that I gathered this summer I have the unparalleled opportunity of learning from my field practicum experience, while also generating new knowledge and findings about the sanitation situation in southern Ethiopia. These findings will be used to further improve the effectiveness of SLGs, and also to advance the discourse on sanitation behavior change. It is thrilling as a development practitioner to be involved with social research that makes a significant contribution to the development field.

*Stephenie Chatfield is a second-year MDP (Masters in Sustainable Development Practice) student. Funding provided by a MacArthur Foundation MDP Summer Practicum Grant.*