**I-WASH Case**

Interview with rep of USAID

20th May 2024.

# Transcript

Interviewer

Thank you very much for doing this interview. My name is Interviewer. I'm a PhD student at xx University in xx and my project is investigating cross sector collaborations in addressing water and sanitation challenges especially in Nigeria. And I just want to confirm your consent for having this interview that is being conducted only for this PhD purpose and the recording now will be stored and processed in the EU or outside of it. But according to the GDPR regulations, please, I just want you to confirm.

Speaker 14U

Yeah, my content is granted.

Interviewer

Alright, thank you Dr. I want to speak specifically about the project you had with green habitat initiative I-WASH and I want you to start from telling us, how did I-WASH emerge?

Speaker 14U

Yeah. You know, I-WASH was. A product of Co-creation, we wanted to at USIAID we wanted to do localization, want to get more local players involved in. In that worst programme on your side, because we understood that already this. Only foreign companies were winning our bids. So we said if we ,when we discover deficiencies in applications we will hand-hold the organisation and go through a process of co-creation to create. To go Together. So when we finished, I think we got. We got two activities from that. They are one, we called them, we got one. Called inclusive integrated. I think one of those inclusive, I think UNICEF had one called integrated then we had inclusive wash. So they GHI had one. There, there were a lot of risk, but when we find when we will see that when you go through the new what we call new new partner assessments of. We discovered that their habitat had a lot of deficiencies, but do we still want to deny them that one because we felt that they have come come a long distance to that? Right. Because when we started, we had over 100 associations beat invent. Great. Having that at the end of the day was only 1 remaining. The only thing that was to knock it out was the failing at the NUPAS. But even when the NUPAS came and that NUPASS reports that were written by the assessors, we still felt. That they should be encouraged and they decided to. Use the mitigation strategy called Fixed AWard. First firm to conduct fixed award. Award so, so. So we use that. So we will pay them by milestones. So that was what happened. And they they followed the milestone. At some points there were deviations. They were trying to skip some of those milestones and we felt that was another is coming up as. If they if they jump all these milestones, to us, that means. They would have taken. The chunk of the money and they want to be there would have been able to do the infrastructure. So what we did was to call them back. At the end we have amicable resolutions we saw they had the case that the dollar fluctuation direct fluctuation against the dollar and the cost of variations in cost because of what was quoted initially and what happened. So so we we decided to shed some of the deliverables to enable them to to work and we are happy even up till today everybody is celebrating what they achieved. We are happy that these locals and did well and they stand a very good chance. I don't speak for the agency but I can say that they stand a very good chance to the same people. Who are recommending them are still around if they have another proposal and they bid, they stand a very, very good chance of of getting another one.

Interviewer

So, so now we've already heard that you have been happy with the work with the partnership that you had, but were there other benefits that you that you USAID gained from this partnership?

Speaker 14U

Yeah. As I said, you know localization, we wanted to get a local organisation that. Localization because want to increase. So I think they came up. They are among the gains made in localization because then. We saw the benefits they were able to have a very good cordial relationship with the locals because locals saw them as part of them. You know, they are not group of people who are totally unknown to the group. So that was it. We got that the, the ability to flow very freely with the locals, and we also had a reputational booster because people who felt. We are intruders now so that we are not intruders. We are ready to work with because they can build their capacity. There is any available locality now I think it's.

Interviewer

do you think your participation in this I-wash has made the government felt a little bit less responsible for? Providing these services to these communities.

Speaker 14U

Yeah, there have not been any follow-up survey in that regards, but there are tradiitional problems in Nigeria that what we should have been doing was to assess gaps in funding specifically to understand where such activities will help. The booster in the budget, so we wouldn't know even if even if a survey to be done, there is no baseline. So, but I think it's a win win. Both for the government and for. The people and for us to.

Interviewer

OK. And in general, so how do you think your involvement affects the water sector?

Speaker 14U

Because for us, we're always interested in boosting the numbers. Boosting the numbers. So for us, the number of people who benefited from that activity, who got access to better drinking, better drinking water Increased. I think increased by over 90%. with this it's a benefit. because we discovered that new infrastructure were built, good works, were rehabilitated, toilets were built. In schools and in community. And the communities appreciated. A lot of dramas did a lot of shootings to show appreciation and.

Speaker 14U

And for an actor that is coming up for the first time to achieve those milestones, to believe what was great, even the people (USAID staff) that manage the activities directly also got awards. Which goes to show you the appreciation on the part of the (USAID) agency that good work was done.

Interviewer

Maybe we can talk a lot more about maybe what other forms of transformation did you see in The beneficiary societies.

Speaker 14U

Come on again.

Interviewer

See if you can talk more about what other transformations you saw with the beneficiary societies due to this activity.

Speaker 14U

Having access to drinking water, it has multiple effects, so I would dwell on that. When people have access, apart from quenching thirst. The issues of stunting. Which is the common problem. Wash people have access to totally managed toilets. Latrines, then have access to totally manage water.

Speaker 14U

They drink water. Two of those vulnerabilities are removed from the environment. And. Economic prosperity, because clean water boost good economic growth to have that influence. Lessons. They can save their money because the money we are used in buying drugs and going to hospital and. And then. Economic empowerment that people owned Some of these queues, took charge of those facilities. Will need to raise money. People have to pay for the water services, so provided employment to those people who charge to to work in that regard.

Interviewer

Yeah. And so were there other ways you believe USAID transformed by participating in this activity?

Speaker 14U

Was transformed?

Interviewer

It was, yeah. Was there any other benefits? Yes. The USAID accrued from implementing it.

Speaker 14U

Yeah. In a lot of these things, I wouldn't know.

Speaker 14U

That we have been transformed because there's a strong appetite. For localization now, because of the good example set by GHI. We have a target of 50% the year 2030. We have the confidence in realizing that…because of performance of GHI and USAID feel that as at of now USAID is almost achieving that, and if local actors again can come up and show a similar promise. We'll get there.

Interviewer

We're there? What was innovative about I-WASH for you?

Speaker 14U

What was principally innovative was the approach of in community engagement, they engage the community in a way that reflects their better understanding of the context, because GHI operated in the northern part of the country and many of the organisations really afraid, security wise and culturally.

Speaker 14U

And in cultural aspect, so. But GHI understood that context very well and went in there and did very well.

Interviewer

Did Trust play any role in this Collaboration that you had?

Speaker 14U

Yeah, there was trust. If there was no trust, no money would have been given. We took the reason one we saw that there were risks. We took the risk again there were.

Speaker 14U

trust was a central part of it because I wanted to trust. Nigeria has not very good image. So when when foreigners come here to do work, they do with suspicion. That's why they prefer to work with home country companies. But we were working with GHI you see that there was, there was trust and that trust. I believe GHI understood, made them. To put in their best, even when it was very difficult even. When they had issues. With variations and limited cash availabilities, they tried their best and delivered so they delivered all that was promised, they didn't fail.

Interviewer

And did you USAID have to build any relations, any new social relations to make I-WASH work?

Speaker 14U

I wouldn't. I wouldn't know.

Interviewer

And in terms of empowerment, Dr, How do you think I-WASH has empowered anyone, even the government? The community, even. Maybe.

Speaker 14U

They empowered RUWASSA. because you worked closely with the RUWASSA.

Interviewer

Yeah. So you are talking about the empowerment. Who and who did this I-WASH empower?

Speaker 14U

They empowered even the AOR, who was not a WASH person. but they learn. Because you give them confidence. Even I remember that a lot of other international relations liked what GHI were doing and they came to ask USAID questions and we happily provided and you know, GH management had the meeting with a lot of new people they didn’t know before. They came based on the recommendations USAID provided.

Interviewer

What about disempowering. So did you think the initiative disempowered?

Speaker 14U

No, no. No, no.

Interviewer

Not even USAID?

Speaker 14U

No.

Interviewer

What about maybe any unintended positive and negative consequences that emerge from I-WASH?

Speaker 14U

None. None that I can think of.

Interviewer

OK.

Speaker 14U

Contact Goke because he is living in the UK, right, it's not in the office.

Interviewer

OK. Yes.

Speaker 14U

Please contact Goke,

Interviewer

Sir. So, I wanted to go back to. I like the point that you were saying earlier. Sometimes. Maybe you said USA ID or other international agencies are seen as intruders. How do you think your identity as an international agency played a role in this collaboration?

Speaker 14U

You know, we have a lot of them, people who went there for schools. They come back and run NGOs. They are Indigenous Group, they are a local group. They cme around and did a good job.

Speaker 14U

We know that a lot of impact organisations they are really because they're coming from America, coming from Britain. They promise what they can deliver. Even the fees. And that to their fees is always very high. We complain about those things in the office. GHI didn’t come with that (high) budget.

Interviewer

But Sir, did you think there were other maybe in positive terms that USAID did something due to their participation in this that maybe GHI or the other local partners could have not other wise achieved. In terms of the role USAID played as an international agency. What do you think are some of those positive roles that you believe maybe the other local partners are going to find challenging to do because they are not probably an international agency?

Speaker 14U

I can't really. I cannot think of anyone now, but a local partner who cannot meet some guidelines, like that of technical workwise with this proposal. It's cannot get a grant anymore at this point. GHI had a technical proposal that was credit worthy and was worthwhile, and then they ought to have basic things like build office, Had staff, anybody who doesn't have it is doing a one man business, but they had all those who also have knowledgeable behind it. People who already understood the sector and they came forward because they think they have something to contribute. GHI had it. Many people didn’t have it.

Interviewer

And do you think the identity of other, I know you started talking about this localization and how maybe more affordable this green habitat was, but were there Other Issues in terms of the identity of the partners that affected the collaboration, both positive or negative.

Speaker 14U

What partner?

Interviewer

Even green habitat was the government?

Speaker 14U

No, there was nothing I have seen. Even with GHI there was determination on their path of desire to succeed. You know, when the other partners were willing or reluctant, they made them to work, they collaborated and it was an intentional collaboration. We need to commend them.

Interviewer

OK, doctor. So what do you think about with the recent memory and history of colonisation in Nigeria, do you think, how do you think about the involvement of maybe USA ideas of foreign Agency in? Development issues in Nigeria.

Joachim

I cannot coment on that. I am a staff of USAID. Excuse me on that.

Interviewer

OK, that is perfectly understandable. OK, so maybe if I come back to Initiative proper. Did it help you to learn, unlearn and relearn. Did the implementation of the I-wash, did it help USAID learn about anything, relearn about something or unlearn about any other thing?

Speaker 14U

Your approach, if you look at what is that approach? What made it to win the fancy that that what you have because we felt that that was. We contributed to knowledge. They have read the proposal. You cannot get that to contribute to something I've been lacking. The use of dramas, involvement of local group in each. Or find ways but you guys when they are. And polished all those things and use them to achieve results.

Interviewer

So what do you think are the challenges you face working with? Whether it's GHI, whether is the government agencies or even other international agencies that you work with?

Speaker 14U

Lack of commitment. GHI there was commitment. People want to get the money but they give excuses. GHI wanted to prove themselves, because they were composed of young men who wanted to break the ceiling.

Interviewer

And maybe with the government, do you have any challenges when you collaborate with the government?

Speaker 14U

Have all kinds of experience with government, but for GHI activity. I think GHI managed the relationship carefully. Many places government don't get committed because they feel the money is not given to them directly.

Speaker 14U

If you don't speak the language, they will not give you attention .someplace if you are not their religion, don't give your attention, but it is of interest that GHI managed those complexities to achieve results.

Interviewer

OK. Thank you. So maybe doctor, my last question will be maybe if there is any other thing that you wish to add that to enable me understand maybe anything that I don't know about I-wash, as a collaboration between a nonprofit and a government agency.

Speaker 14U

I know that the managers of GHI couldn't believe that they got an award when they got an award letter. So. But you got it so that shows you that USAID can be your friend. Don't be afraid from the beginning. Do something with a lot of courage. There are outcomes. The only thing just try.

Speaker 14U

The outcome may surprising, which I believe surprising, but I think we are still waiting to do business with them. If they respond to future calls.

Interviewer

Thank you very much.