Interview with rep of GHI

# Transcript

Interviewer

Hamza. Good afternoon. My name is Interviewer.. I'm a xx at xxx. And I'm investigating Role of cross sector collaboration through social innovation in addressing urban challenges in Nigeria. Challenges, especially related to water, sanitation and municipal solid waste management and by cross sector, I mean, looking at actors or organizations, but I like to call them actors from different sectors. And I mean the sector, like the public, which is the government sector, the private sector, the third sector, the nonprofit sector and …and in my own case, I'm looking for projects that Have collaborations from the government agency. There is an international agency. There is also a local or national agency, whereas a social enterprise or national profits. And I thought that I-WASH case that you have worked on Perfectly fits this description and I'm trying to understand the role each of these actors is playing in this collaboration. My main interest is is to see the role of each actor and the transformative impact, or the impact that they bring to the societies, and because I would also like to go and speak to the beneficiary society. To ask them about the impact of this cross-sector of collaboration, that is one, and I'm trying to understand the collaborative framework of the governance framework. So again, if you call it a collaboration, but how collaborative is it? So I'm interested in the governance. Framework around how you do actors or the actors in these cases, organizing themselves are governing themselves, are taking decisions and from a very perspective of governance, so to speak, looking at the power dynamic and the asymmetries between the different organizations. So. So that's I think what I'm trying to investigate and yes, I know you've been part of the I-wash case study, and and I would like for you to maybe first of all, I would like to mention that all this data and collecting this from my PhD. The research and I will. Record this conversation. I will save it, process it and analyze the results within the the EU zone and even outside of it, and process any personal data according to the EU GDPR and that of Nigeria as well. So I would like to seek your consent in doing that and I also have very briefly introduce yourself and the role that you played in I-WASH.

Speaker 13GH

OK. Thank you very much for that. My name is Doctor Hamza Jakada and I Started as the co-author for the I-WASH program and eventually became the Deputy Project management, manager and thereafter became the project manager for over a year. And I have seen the project to its successful completion, yeah, I think. That's that's the role I played here.

Interviewer

Maybe if you can respond to the seeking consent.

Speaker 13GH

Oh, sure, you have my consent to use the data for your activity, for your PhD program.

Interviewer

OK, thank you. So please, you can start by telling me how this your how I-WASH emerged?

Speaker 13GH

OK. So the I-WASH program that emerged out of the Prevalent cholera outbreaks in Nigeria and also the very Low access to basic wash services in the country, especially in the northwestern part of the country. Thereafter, the green habitat initiative applied for a grant through the United States Agency for International Development. To increase access to basic WASH services in selected states particularly Kebbi and Sokoto to improve health outcomes and reduce economic and social vulnerabilities that are associated with that. So that's how the program came about.

Interviewer

So you said you're applying to the USAID?

Speaker 13GH

Uhum!

Interviewer

And if you can maybe shed more light on how yes the application process and how it eventually you If you see it as a collaborative project or a cross sector collaboration or what?

Speaker 13GH

Yes.

Speaker 13GH

The opportunity from USAID came from the agencies designed to Advance local participation in project implementation. And Green Habitat initiative was considered for Its role, and also for its ability to meet the expectations of the donors. I mean several other organisations applied, but GHI emerged successful and the project was really collaborative Activity because though the application for the grant was received by the USAID, throughout the engagement process before implementation started, that was a Co creation phase. So this cooperation phase was a collaboration between the USAID's WASH Unit or Wash department, in collaboration with GHI to explore the content of the GHI application and proposal to make it. More robust make it more sustainable and to also meet the regulatory and yeah regulatory compliances of the USAID. So that took, that took almost a year, but I think close to 10 months it was a very rigorous process to redesign and. Co-create the project so between the GHI team and the USAID WASH team.

Interviewer

So I know you started mentioned earlier that one of the motivations for the program is the development challenges you were mentioning. Were you there physically and surveyed the place, what were the challenges? I'm not sure how you confirmed the challenges that you started talking about and when you went there on the ground physically, what were the challenges and how did they come to be the motivation?

Speaker 13GH

So. Like I said, the motivation came out of the backdrop of the prevalent cholera crisis in the country. I think from 2018 to 2020, there are a number of cholera outbreaks in Nigeria and the northern part of the country was usually the worst hit during these annual outbreaks. And then? Umm. An investigation into the available wash data that was developed or published by UNICEF in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Water Resources also indicated the very poor water and sanitation indices in the north. So this. This information and data kind of formed the background and prior to that green habitat had been actually carrying out some of these wash programs and you know, we had an idea, a good idea of what the indices were and the gaps. But going into the implementation, we did conduct a baseline assessment and we found that the surveys and assessment closely matched the national data from the Ministry of Water Resources and UNICEF. The the data is very close and there that actually increased our conviction for the need for the project.

Interviewer

And after you we implemented the program, how did you confirm? These challenges that you identified earlier have been addressed?

Speaker 13GH

OK, so there was a baseline assessment like I mentioned and we also had an endline assessment which was conducted at the end of the life cycle of The project. So we basically did a second round of survey and put it side by side with the baseline data and we observed that there had been significant. Increase in access to basic WASH services and health outcomes data that we collected from. Healthcare centers from schools, from communities showed significant increase to access to basic water services and also fewer visits to the hospitals and reports of water borne diseases related issues.

Interviewer

So how would you say that the program transformed these societies, if they have?

Speaker 13GH

Well, from the feedback I mean I still receive phone calls. Even I think two or three weeks ago I received a phone call from some of these communities and it's just basically a big thank you. The distances they travel to get clean water have been has been reduced significantly as you may wish to know the water projects were cited in various strategic locations within the communities. So prior to the intervention, community members would usually, you know, attract long distances. But now the water points are very close to there domains and they can easily access this water similarly, also again at the schools. The toilets that were constructed at schools has Been very impactful because now students want to come to school. Because of the running water, you know in the school facility and also the toilets that they have which are actually they don't even have those kind of toilets at home. So the kids are actually very excited to come to school and stay in school. So these are some of the feedbacks. We obtained from the endline survey and also from personal testimonies which I have received personally.

Interviewer

And what about the Transformation beyond the society. Did I-WASH have any transformative impact on you as the organization or your other partners, the government, USAID, what effect did it have on you as an organization?

Speaker 13GH

Yes, as far as the transformational impact goes for the organization, there has certainly been an increase in awareness, increasing awareness of the Significance of collaboration, inclusion In project. And also the role, the different roles of stakeholders when it comes to Project implementation and then. One other I think very important consideration is the Understanding the regulatory framework, all the different actors, you know that. You have to engage with. So for example, the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning Is the entry point For all development activities (in states). And they actually play a very significant role because they help to reduce the bureaucratic protocol and barrier, especially in terms of working with other partner agencies. So the I-wash program has the Ministry of Water Resources, it has the local rural water agency, has the Ministry of Health and Education as Co collaborators sometimes. The bureaucracy in terms of getting their full attention and cooperation can be difficult, but you know the Ministry of budget addresses that through a central coordination. So I think that has also being transformational in terms of how we engage with our partners and how our partners support us in breaking down some of the social political uncertainties and risks, if you like, yeah. So.

Interviewer

So will you say that some of the impacts that you have created will not have been possible without the participation of some Of these sectoral actuals.

Speaker 13GH

Oh, absolutely, without a doubt. So you know. Project has structural complexities. They have social political complexities and they have emergent issues, complexities or emerging complexities and. Structural complexities have to do with the Kind of routine or thematic issues that emerge, you know from implementing the project or the social political, for example, complexities they come with, how would the people perceive or accept this intervention? What are the bureaucracies? What are the regulations? So these kind of complexities have a very significant impact on project implementation. We've seen several projects in Nigeria and of course around the world that have been affected by changing policies. You start doing one thing today, then the government announces a new policy, you know, and then... So in our own case, I think would be. With the bureaucracy. That partners really helped breakdown those barriers.

Interviewer

You maybe point to maybe something more specific than an actor has done that you maybe will not be able or you not have been able to do with your organizational.

Speaker 13GH

Yes. Yes. So one key issue as I recall is the Permit to start working in health centers, in healthcare centers. And the permit was supposed to come from the Ministry of Health. But the permanent secretary was inaccessible. You know, we tried to engage him. Even through the ministry of budget, you know we wrote and copied them, but for some reason he, the permanent secretary was inaccessible. The Commissioner was also not available. But through our collaboration with the primary healthcare agency. The primary healthcare agency, you know that actually helped, the then executive secretary was the one who authorized the permit for us to start doing the project or implementing the projects in the health centers. He actually directed I think the director planning or something, one of the directors along with some of their staff to actually go and sign off on the take off of the project. So that was really helpful and during the project implementation, we kept getting calls from the department of state security (DSS). The DSS wanting to inquire whether we had permission or license to carry out those constructions and thankfully, you know we had because of the support we got from the state primary healthcare development agency. So like that is one example that I recall where. One of these state actors was able to assist in with some of the bureaucratic processes.

Interviewer

Hmmm!

Interviewer

Did you think your participation or the participation (…in development affairs)of one of all these actors involved makes one of the organizations feel like maybe the government feel less responsible for maybe what they are supposed to be doing with themselves.

Speaker 13GH

I think to be honest, I think it's an issue of…It's an issue that comes out of the weak capacity or low capacity, if you like. You there is always in Nigeria you find specialised agencies, technical agencies have more capacity and are more professional in how they operate compared to parent ministries… in parent ministries, the bureaucracy is very high... They're usually very big organizations with so many ongoing projects, and there's just… I'm not sure what word to use, but their operations is not great and they can be very slow in treating matters. So I think the issue here is you will find, when you have a…when you have a robust collaborative approach, tendency is you will find actors that will become enablers and supporters. You know it's a kind of complementary thing. And that's why cross collaboration is very, very important. You know it, it can be complementary. In terms of how regulations are understood, overcome, or challenges in the field are overcome.

Interviewer

And you do not think that your activity or your participation has not disempowered anyone, any of the actors, the beneficiaries or even the organization you represent?

Speaker 13GH

I don't think so. I can't think of if we… How that could be possible? Certainly we didn't receive any reports of anyone being disempowered. We also did not record any such outcomes in our surveys.

Interviewer

But like, maybe we understand that some of these government agencies are responsible for providing some of these services and it's probably due to a governance failure that they have not been able to and your participation to provide some of these services may have made them to take a step backward, disempowering them… for them to say they also have done this. But they didn't do it or they are happy that you are doing it you. didn't you see any elements of you intervening in these communities, having even maybe some actors not wanting to intervene in such communities?

Speaker 13GH

I wouldn't. I wouldn't. I wouldn't agree with that. Yes, I wouldn't agree with that because the states… So it's a subnational project. Right? so these states have their own WASH programs. They have their own budgets. The implementation may not be as the masses would like or as would you know, in terms of meeting the expected targets, but they do have budgets for these programs and they are implementing these programs and I think our projects if anything, enhances the capacities of these actors to implement their own projects because through the Collaboration there is always that cross learning. There's always that cross learning and because we implement with all the stakeholders, so most of the surveys are done in collaboration with them. The implementation is done in collaboration with the state actors and so they participate in seminars, in workshops and yeah, in the construction. So all of these activities go a long way in enhancing the local capacity of these state actors. They are availed trainings and also state-of-the-art methodologies in implementation which hitherto they may they might not have been opportunity to have, based on the limited funding or budget of the of the state government. So I think for me it's mostly positives, yes.

Speaker

Hmm.

Interviewer

OK. And then in terms of the social relations, how did you think your activity affected social relations in those communities?

Speaker 13GH

So one of the key expectations of project was to establish a community management structure as a sustainability mechanism. For the intervention, we saw a lot of Communications, meetings, collaborations within the community. Through the platform of this community management structure, which during the first entry, we did not see that level of engagement and collaboration within the Community. So I think the project was a rallying point, it enhanced social interaction. There was better coordination within the community. You know the project gave the community leadership a voice to direct the communities to improve Certain things. So for example, before the project, before the construction started, the community leaders had a hard time trying to rally the support of the community members to stop defecating in the open because part of the conditions for the project was we're going to start with sanitation first. That the committee members have to commit something ,they have to also show that they are interested and committed to improving their own well beings and health outcomes. So, but by the time the management structure was set up and the construction work started, that really incentivized and motivated and inspired community members to come together to, to start engaging in communal service, cleaning of the environment. And all of that. So the project definitely improved that. Some of the political crisis, you know, like there, there is one community. Maruda so they have two chieftains and there was a lot of back and forth. But eventually we were able to unite the two factions based on the benefit, the immense benefit the solar powered borehole was bringing. the yield of the borehole was enough to serve both sides. And that really brought down the tension between the two political rivals.

Interviewer

And what about, how welcome or welcomed were you in some of these communities?

Speaker 13GH

Generally, it was positive during the community engagements. I would say that we had a very positive reception, we were received well. There were concerns. The committee members are not entirely new to programs and interventions, either by donor agencies or by the government, and sometimes these projects fail or are not implemented to completion. And you know, it's usually a huge disappointment. So we did receive those kind of comments from the community. They were very sensitive about the sincerity of our mission. They were very cautious about committing to us in the beginning without seeing any kind of tangible incentive. So I think that's the only sensitivities I observed within the communities that they were a bit wary and skeptical about the intervention. But as time progressed with the Community Led total sanitation program. You know the trust Was built. And eventually by the end of the project. It was. It was just nothing but good engagement and reception from the community.

Interviewer

So how did how were you able to build this trust? Because you said they didn't have. They were cautious about how they committed to You? How? Did you think they came to terms with trusting you. What was the role that trust played in this?

Speaker 13GH

So there are three things. That I felt…that I feel played a very strong role. Number one is transparency. We were very transparent about our intent. Our intentions and also the scope of the program. This help to manage the expectations of the stakeholders, you know stakeholder expectation, you know managing stakeholder expectations is very, very, very important. So. We are very transparent and open about that, so this helped to manage the expectations because some of them were expecting manners to fall from heaven. Some of them usually, when rural community people when they see intervention they're expecting maybe Cash transfer program. And things like that. And we are very clear to them that this is not a cash transfer program. We're not here to share the goodies, we're here to improve access to WASH services and these watch services entail. Solar power boreholes, toilets and handwashing facilities. This is where they would be situated so we were very very transparent about our mission and the scope of the project. This is why. Secondly. We set up that community management structure. And they were integral parts of the project implementation, so the community was carried along. The representation from the leadership of the community was carried along, so they were well informed and even during periods where we had some delays. Where some of the communities were becoming jittery around the success of the project, we were still able to maintain that trust due to the fact that we were carrying them along throughout the implementation process. So for example, I recall vividly we were at Sauwa community. During a community discussion and one of the committee members stood up and was very bitter about the fact that we've been visiting this community for several months and up till now they are not even sure if this thing is ever going to take place. And thankfully, we had shared the procurement advert for the projects, which was published in two national dailies in the region, we likely shared that and one of the community leaders who received a copy, stood up and defended us and was like no, I actually read in the last newspaper it's been published the advertisements for the procurement of this project have actually been advertising in the national dailies. So I think that was that was a big one for us so I think by carrying the community along that really helped to build the trust. And then finally the last one is having that robust collaboration. So coming in with government agents you know, gave us, it added that credibility to our mission. So in other words, whenever we were visiting these communities, we actually went with government agents. Who are from the community as well, so that actually enhanced our credibility in terms of our engagement and that really built the trust.

Interviewer

OK, doctor, so how do you think the culture, the tradition and the religion in this place affected your relations, with this partners and communities as well?

Speaker 13GH

So in northern Nigeria the predominant religion and culture is conservative. And gender roles are very specific. And we realized from the onset that there would be a huge battle, you know, for us to improve gender equality, gender inclusion. And so we were very clear about this from the beginning. We had set the target of about… Increasing inclusion, gender inclusion and participation from zero to about 25%. So from the government agencies and partners, we didn't face much challenge as we had earlier anticipated. The only I think problem was in terms of the availability of female officers which sometimes the government agency just simply lacked, you know, a female officer maybe to nominate or to engage for certain activities. But where there was, our request for that quota was actually met. In the communities, we had to approach it by being sensitive to the religious and cultural norms. So we were very strategic. We held dual programs, one for men and another for women.

Speaker 13GH

And this was achieved through the support of the leadership of the communities. We were very clear about our intent and we were able to convince the Community leadership that by engaging women, we are actually increasing our chances of better outcomes. And especially with the community led total sanitation program, we saw that the women were actually the drivers of this of the success of the program. And We made it clear that these women are usually those, they're usually the ones at the frontline. And they're the ones that usually suffer the most. So, for example, in terms of access to toilet facilities if we would cite like a typical example would cite is if your wife or your sister or your daughter has to go out to the bushes to ease herself and she gets accosted, you know that would be a very terrible thing to happen to someone close to you. But by providing a toilet within the home, it actually provides her with a safe space. And this was a very strong message that was received well and the women actually were able to push their husbands to make the initial conditional commitment of providing 30% of the funds for the toilet, as you know. Like our program was, it was…the toilet was subsidized. So the toilets were ultimately built by the community people. But we gave them some incentives. So those conditions were were met through the advocacy of the wives and the women you know in the community. So I don't know if that answers the question.

Interviewer

Yes, I have gotten a lot of how both it was a challenge to the culture and also of course, how it also helped to address some of the issues, to achieve the results that you are aiming

And what will you say is the unintended positive and negatives of your activity? Between whoever, you and the partners, USAID, RUWASSA, the local governments or even you and the community.

Speaker 13GH

Hmmm! I really can't think of any. Yeah, I really can't think of anything right now.

Interviewer

Hmmm! Was there any negative impact resulting from your activity that affected you, the government, the donor, the communities or everything was positive about this activity is what you are saying? Which is very difficult to think of.

Speaker 13GH

Yes, I'm really trying to think about it because I think I really can't think of any negatives to be honest, if anything, it's that… I mean in terms of meeting our targets, we certainly didn't hit all the targets 100%. So for example, on the issue of sanitation. The sustainability there in that particular segment of the program required the local government wash units that we had set up to Continue to engage with the community to take the community to a position or a state of being open defecation free. But that really Couldn't happen because the local government couldn't match the expectation in terms of funding and providing logistical support for their staff to visit these communities and engage with the community members. So I'm not sure if that will be considered like a negative outcome. You know of the project. It's just a constraint that had always been there. We tried to to push the local government and the state government to pay attention to this domain. But you know government always tell you that they have competing priorities and limited funding so. I cannot think of a negative outcome.

Interviewer

I know already started talking about how the communities were cautious about your activity. How would you think their perception was, You working with a foreign agency or international agency, right, the USAID?

Speaker 13GH

The perception was…we didn't see any negative perception I think. And I think this goes a long way to show that because the way the implementation was done in a collaborative manner. So you are not seeing strangers, you are not seeing people that are alien. The methodology and approach for implementation is sensitive to the norms and to the culture, so the perception was good. The reception was open, although cautious like I told you, and that was just based on the disappointments that they have experience from other projects in the past. I think an outcome from our project is that these communities are more receptive and probably more positive about donor interventions now because they've seen one that works. You know, they've seen one that meets their expectations. Yes, because I was recently part of a project that… one of the tasks we did was to actually do this baseline community engagement. And I heard a lot of these comments, in fact, that there was one in one community who was very aggressive to us and started narrating... So basically, the intervention is an erosion intervention and the one of the community members was very upset that he had been part of different programs and activities to mitigate this erosion. You know, starting from Governor Dakingari down to Bagudu administration. They don't want to have any of it. We should pack our things and leave. So I think it's a common thing around Nigeria because sometimes we have these ambitious programs, but they're never completed or we never see them through and that creates a kind of apathy within the local populace.

Interviewer

What about the history of.. the recent history of colonization and the memory of colonization? Not not enough that made you. Community these communities but also accommodate you as a nonprofit and how you see the involvement of the USAID in the development affairs.

Speaker 13GH

Hmm.

Interviewer

…With the memory optimization, how do you see that participation?

Speaker 13GH

So you know from the beginning, like I told you, the I-WASH was conceived out of the USAID's local initiative. So We being in the frontline, we are from these communities, we speak the language and that really helped in breaking down some of these social political barriers. I think that's something that has to be given due consideration and moving forward I think. International agencies have to recognize the important role of local partners In implementation. I reckon that one of the reasons why our projects succeeded is because we are local partners and we know, the way we navigate the local terrain, In terms of the complexities and uncertainty, some of these some of the uncertainties where if we are even biased to those so we don't see them. probably if a foreigner came or was in charge, he will put up all of these complexities as risks. But because we are from the communities. We are just biased probably to those risks and we don't even see them as risks and so implementation is very easy because what a foreigner may consider a social challenge for us, it may just be a cup of tea. You know, just having a cup of tea and having a discussion and we will overcome that obstacle. So I think we must not underestimate the role of local partners driving projects, driving the implementation of projects. I think this has this should be the new normal. Henceforth.

Interviewer

And so you mentioned earlier that the communities were more receptive to donor interventions because they have seen that work. And so based on this your last point that local partners should be part of this, what are you saying with regards to international agencies participation with in the development affairs?

Speaker 13GH

Yeah, what I'm saying is that they should prioritize local partners.

Speaker 13GH

Can you take that again?

Interviewer

Yeah. Earlier you mentioned communities are more receptive to donor interventions than maybe there local government interventions. So are you indirectly also promoting that foreign agencies should continue to be intervening?

Speaker 13GH

Oh yes.

Speaker 13GH

Yes, I think that in that I was only alluding to the I-WASH has been successful as I do know not so many donor funded programs are successful right, in Nigeria. So I was only been particular to the I-wash. If anything like an outcome would be that these things actually can be done.

Speaker 13GH

And they are actually working but. Overall I think the baseline should be that or the benchmark should be that Local participation is given the priority. And If you want to, if you want to cover all bases, then probably government agencies should also be open to collaborating with Nonprofits, donor agencies in terms of, you know, implementation, so for example. We know that. Let's say Federal Ministry of Water Resources, they earmark some money for water boreholes. They just go internally through their own ministry and implement. They don't. They don't bring in collaborators from outside. They use their own local and institutional framework to just implement.

Speaker 13GH

Henceforth, maybe they would want to bring in Foreign partners that are working within the country, so it may not necessarily be a bad idea if, let's say, a mixture of water resources has a program to increase access to basic water services. And they have a budget line for it, but as part of their operational framework they bring in partners from USAID, from UNICEF, from GHI. You know, either as stakeholders or technical partners to help support the implementation, so they may not necessarily be directly involved, but they may be a part of some kind of steering committee or an advisory committee. Perhaps that will enhance the implementation of projects by government.

Interviewer

So how did you think I-WASH has affected the water sector or the WASH sector, now that you are talking some of the learnings?

Speaker 13GH

In what way? Like?

Interviewer

Yes, I mean now you've give this kind of recommendation to review the operational framework of the water resources agencies. So that is a learning from this activity, so perhaps beyond that. Are there other ways I-WASH affected the sector in general. You suggesting this regional framework with national agencies.

Speaker 13GH

Yeah. Yes, I think it's the triple planetary is the approach to addressing the triple planetary crisis of Climate change. Environmental degradation and pollution. The I-wash is an integrated project. Which mainstreamed climate change. You know, monitor vulnerabilities and environmental pollution. It mainstreamed these three things into the wash program. And I think prior to that we have, we haven't seen similar. Especially, or at least particularly in Nigeria, so that is 1 positive and we did recognize that several WASH programs that came after adopted this approach of mainstreaming at least climate change. Two implementation, but I think that can be expanded to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change. Environmental degradation and. Pollution. So yeah, so I think that's one also learning from from now on.

Interviewer

And the next question I like to ask you there. We're talking about how I-WASH helped you learn, unlearn and relearn anything about what you encountered, even yourself, or as the organization you're representing, or even between your partners?

Speaker 13GH

I think the first one. Right is the Importance of Collaboration. Collaboration, we cannot over- emphasize collaboration because it basically opens up Opportunities for learning for breaking barriers. For advancing the course. For sharing the weights and the responsibilities and for allowing Different perspectives you know to improve and enhance the overall Goal of the of the project. So I think. Because as human beings, although some people are generally open, but there's always that tendency to be closed up, to be conservative, but opening up for me personally like that is one learning and even for the organization, because this would be the first time the organization would be working with all these multiple partners and different players, community level, local government level state, the federal, donors and It improved our capacity and our ability to manage different stakeholders and realize the benefit you know in doing that. The projects that came thereafter after the I-wash have actually demonstrated or have actually prioritized collaboration. To you know on for their implementation. And then I think Another one is really the understanding that Some of these solutions are not one size fit all. And Context matters. Uhm! In terms of improving and modifying this. This solution so for example. We first started with CLTS and then we now transition to CLTS plus plus. That was like that was a serious unlearning if you like. It's caused internal problems within the organization because the lead for the CLTS was adamant that no, these people have to do this thing by themselves. We Cannot... If we give them anything, then we will spoil the entire program. You know, while some of the team members were like, no, you know, we have to provide some incentives, there's the issue of poverty going on there. There are so many factors that so eventually we had to transition to CTS plus plus. So this was a clear case of You know, understanding that you know this approach of one-size-fits-all you know doesn't work, you know, from my experience what she was presenting or what the lead was presenting at the time worked in another place, but it certainly was not working.

Interviewer

And so maybe now that we are talking about some of the challenges that you have faced. What are other challenges that you face? Collaborating with your partners and also the attempting to address the development challenges that you identified at the beginning.

Speaker 13GH

OK, so I think some of the challenges. We're mostly. We have operational challenges. Operational challenges. You know recruiting. The level of expertise that was required to meet the expectations of the project Was locally unavailable or limited, was locally limited. We often had to recruit from long distances, which was not always possible. You may recall we recruited. We recruited an officer. Who was to resume… In fact, I think, He had shipped his items only for him to resign even before his resumption. So and certainly the distance played a role because it was a domestic issue, you know.

Definitely. If the project was in Abuja, that wouldn't have been the case. But travelling and leaving his family behind was an issue and. So we had to start advertising and looking for new recruits. So we suffered some of those type of issues where we had to recruit from long distances and that affected budgeting, and then, of course, the COVID-19 shocks. We're also very impactful in terms of the inflation and also the benchmarking of the US dollar, you know the currency, the Forex challenge, all of these things affected. There were huge challenges that we had to overcome.

Interviewer

What about challenges with partners like USAID?

Speaker 13GH

Yes, yes, yes, that's a good one. There were a lot of challenges because I think with USAID was that they were not listening, you know, they they were not as cooperative as it is a Cooperative agreement. But you know they were not showing a lot of cooperation, and I think it's probably because of their size at the local level. And possibly because they're just used to, not. I think being very active in projects I don't want to cast very a generalization, but I'm not sure how many cooperative agreements they have and the extent of the role they play. You know in these agreements because at different phases we will ask for support, to send inquiry, this about regulations, you know, protocol for implementation, but they'll be silence for weeks, for months, you know? So this was also really a huge challenge. So From that perspective, I would say that work with the USAID in particular, not just donor in agencies in general, but in particular to the USAID, the agency wasn't very responsive. You know, I'm not sure I don't know exactly why I really can't say exactly why. But I think that should be looked into.

Interviewer

What about the government?

Speaker 13GH

Yeah, the governments. It's it's almost the same thing in terms of slow response to issues, the bureaucracy, but our knowledge of the local terrain helped us, you know, overcome some of those. Some of those gaps, and I think working with the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning help to minimize the need for us to be stretched out, you know, in terms of engaging all the parts. So the ministry of budget provided a central platform. You know, through which we could access all the other ministries or be protected from all the all the other ministries so. So I think there were challenges, definitely. There was bureaucracy even in terms of agreeing on who the primary. Who should play the primary role in terms of the implementation? The Ministry of Water Resources was there. The. Rural water supply and sanitation agency was there so you know that there is overlap there in terms of their roles. So we also face some challenges there. Because RUWASSA couldn't really demonstrate the kind of leadership that we had expected. Because of the current Ministry of Water Resources in the state, you know, casting a shadow on. So so those are some of the local bureaucracies that affected you know, so it led to one or two delays in implementation.

Interviewer

What about innovations? How innovative was I-WASH?

The first, of course, is the mainstreaming. Is the mainstreaming of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, Pollution and Environmental degradation. It's a huge innovation. And UM. Another innovation was the Economic empowerment. Economic empowerment that was given to The entire value chain. You know the entire wash value chain from Vendors from vendors In the market that sold spare parts that sold The toilet wares To mechanics in the communities and the consumers, so you know the Iwash actually activated and catalyzed these different segments of the value chain. Even down to the Masons, so most of the Results that were achieved couldn't have been achieved if we did not activate and catalyze these different segments of the value chain and integrate them. To work well. So that's that. That was also the huge innovation. And that has not been done, you know, in the in the country before. Another innovation is the monitoring of the water facilities, the I-wash conceptualized and developed, a remote monitoring System That Tracks or tracks the functionality of boreholes and we have seen it in operation. And we have seen where boreholes fail and technicians go in to fix this in record time. Of course, another innovation is the is the social enterprise. You know Which are still functional, you know in their in their own capacity, I think that's.

Interviewer

What is the innovation of the social enterprise?

Speaker 13GH

The innovation there about the social Enterprise is that we have local mechanics that are able to intervene within record time to restore the functionality of these water facilities. We all know that WASH programs, especially with all rural programs around the world Face the problem of sustainable water supply. You know, these are mechanical and electrical parts and they are subject to wearing and tearing and falling apart, so they require maintenance and Having the Remote monitoring system in place to provide a real time view for the mechanics there's actually a huge innovation because it actually reduces The downtime of these facilities. We have we had seen a facility that was down for Two years and was fixed in record time with less than 5000 naira. You know, in Maruda that to be precise, you know, so these are some of the innovations.

Interviewer

So doctor of every my last question actually. Is an open one. If there is anything That you wish to add to The discussion, to add to my understanding or something that you wanted to Go back to to comment on?

Speaker 13GH

Umm.

Interviewer

Maybe this Impact analysis that you're also talking about.

Speaker 13GH

Yes. So I first would recommend that a post impact analysis should be conducted. The project did an endline survey. But having a post impact assessment. Yeah. For example, after the project has closed, two years after the project has closed, will be very good in terms of the footprint of the project and the organization. UM. Similarly, I think in terms of. Because for me as a project manager, sometimes you know. I'm thinking More in terms of operations. And in terms of the Methodologies and technical approaches. Which I think if the. It's not necessarily Novel the same, but I think a kind of incorporation of agile techniques. Ajile project management techniques you know, would really would really help in. Resolving some of the Challenges, like in hindsight, I reckon that all the delays and some of the drawbacks we had collaborating with USAID. If we had, you know, employed in more agile approach, you know some of the. Outcomes or even milestone of milestones would have been achieved. Earlier so there are operational. Revisions you know that I would like if I if I had to go back, but generally I think we need to know what the post impact assessment is like, especially for a wash program where we know that the tendency for these toilets and boreholes, you know to last beyond a certain lifespan or beyond a certain number of years is always an issue because of operations and management. So it's it will be really good to revisit those sustainability. Mechanisms that were established to see what has worked, what is working and what hasn't, and what why did it fail and how can it be improved. So we had a number of sustainability mechanisms, for example the social enterprises there. The mechanics are there, the Community management structures are there. What's working? What's not and how can they be improved? I think that would be a very interesting thing to find out about so that the lessons can be applied for future interventions.

Interviewer

Thank you very much.

Speaker 13GH

You are welcome.