



AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Strengthening water, sanitation, and hygiene systems together.

Terms of Reference – Systems Change Research Consultant

May 15, 2020

Duty Station: Remote; home-based

Approximate Duration: ASAP – December 2020

The Agenda for Change Global Hub would like to engage a consultant to help synthesize and analyze various types of available evidence.

Purpose of research

Synthesize available quantitative and qualitative data that has already been collected by Agenda for Change members and others to explore whether there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that strong water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems at local or national levels can be linked to better service levels than in places without strong systems.

Audience

Agenda for Change members, national and local governments, funders, investors, and the broader sector.

About Agenda for Change

Founded in 2015, [Agenda for Change](#) is a collaborative response to the challenge of reaching sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service delivery as outlined under Sustainable Development Goal 6. Our 14 members are all working to support national and local governments in strengthening the WASH systems required to deliver universal, sustained access to WASH services, and believe that can be more done more effectively through collective action¹. Current members include: Aguaconsult, CARE, CRS, The Center for Water Security and Cooperation (CWSC), Concern Worldwide, Helvetas, IRC, Osprey Foundation, Splash, WaterAid, Water for Good, Water For People, WaterSHED, and Welthungerhilfe. These organizations (referred to throughout as Members) are engaged in WASH systems strengthening efforts in more than 40 countries, but not all of them are collaborating with other NGOs in such efforts.

Background

Until recently, Agenda for Change has not had a coherent compilation of evidence of the impact of collective action toward WASH systems strengthening. An example of evidence we are trying to compile from Members can be found [here](#). We have started the process of compiling evidence, including national and local assessments, service level data, plans, and costing data.

¹ Collective action is based on the assumption that to achieve positive change in any complex system will require many independent actors and the incentives that drive them to align to produce different and more positive outcomes; in this case more sustainable, better and more universal WASH services. Such collective action can be established at local, national and global levels and indeed it is a core element of collective action to have “vertical” linkages and flows of interaction and learning between these levels, as well as “horizontal” interactions. Collective action should include all stakeholders or at least account for their perspective/position and usually includes a platform or mechanism for coordination and learning, sometimes referred to as a Learning Alliance supported by a hub or a backbone organization. (Adapted from Agenda for Change Global Framework 2019)

We want to be cautious not to duplicate effort. Each of the Members has data collection processes, and some of their funders are also collecting data that could be relevant to this exercise. For example, one foundation that funds several Members is likely to be tracking changes/differences within each district's water service delivery system (service levels, funding flows, human resource capacity). Furthermore, some programs that Members are involved in are collecting and analyzing similar data (e.g., [Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership \(SWS\)](#), [Sustainable Services Initiative](#)). In addition, there are other relevant literature reviews such as [System Approaches to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: A Systematic Literature Review](#), research projects like [PMA 2020](#), and national MIS or global databases like the [Joint Monitoring Programme](#).

Each Member (and probably each program) has its own theory of change, frameworks for evaluation, and data collection processes. Some have different versions of systems strengthening building blocks. As a recent [survey](#) found, “collaborative approaches for service delivery in development contexts are similar in many ways to those in non-development contexts but also unique in a few critical ways.” We are seeking a meta way to evaluate a myriad of different approaches to systems strengthening against our overall collaborative theory of change (see Table 1 for where these assessments fit). See Table 2 for research questions, suggested methodology, and expected deliverables.

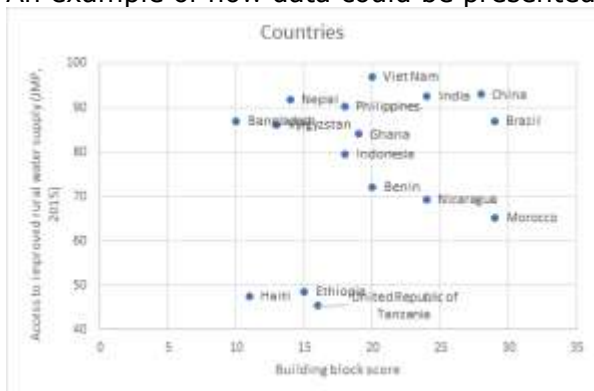
Possible frameworks for analysis

There are several frameworks that could be adopted or adapted for this work. We expect the consultant to suggest the most relevant one(s) based on the information available. This should encompass contextual and relational information about complex systems². Examples of related frameworks include the following:

- [Six conditions of systems change](#)
- [5Rs framework](#)
- Sanitation and Water for All [Collaborative Behaviors](#) or [Building Blocks](#)
- [Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership Adapting Collaborative Approaches for Service Provision to Development Contexts: Expert Panel Results](#)
- Agenda for Change [building blocks](#) & desired state of country collaborations

Agenda for Change will assemble a peer review group to come to consensus on the framework before Phase Two begins.

An example of how data could be presented is below



² <https://batesoninstitute.org/warm-data-labs/>

Timing, level of effort and location of work

Given the current global pandemic, in the near future it is expected that all work will be done remotely by email and conference call platform. At this point, travel to country programs or global conferences or meetings is not anticipated. The consultant's evidence collection efforts will be supported by the Agenda for Change Secretariat. The total level of effort of the assignment is expected to be 45 to 60 days from May through December 2020.

Qualifications

Work experience

- At least 10 years of professional experience, including experience evaluating international programs, with experience in WASH an advantage.
- Knowledge of the landscape of WASH systems strengthening.
- Demonstrated ability to get diverse groups to respond to requests for information.
- Experience working in low- and middle-income settings an advantage.

Competencies

- Quantitative and qualitative evaluation
- Strong organizational, planning, and analytical skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication in English required. French and/or Spanish preferred.
- Good judgment, initiative, high sense of responsibility
- Demonstrated cultural sensitivity and ability to establish harmonious working relations in a multicultural environment

Education

- Advanced degree in engineering, public health, systems change or other relevant discipline.

To apply

- Send cover letter describing any relevant research and CV by May 29 2020 to susan@washagendaforchange.net
- Include a financial proposal with your daily/monthly rate (in USD) and estimated days to undertake the terms of reference. Out of pocket costs (e.g., travel) will be reimbursed with advance approval according to IRC requirements (the Agenda for Change Secretariat is hosted by IRC).

Table 1 - Agenda for Change goals, activities, and measurements of success³

Goal	Activity	Measurement of success	Has measurement been developed/applied?
Ultimate goal	Reach specific targets of SDG 6 by 2030 and beyond	Joint Monitoring Programme	Yes/Yes
What we believe will get us to ultimate goal	Strong country systems	National building blocks assessment in country workshops / joint sector review / WASHBAT	Varies/Focus of this TOR
What Agenda for Change's part is in above	Collaboration at national level	Assess collaboration as part of country workshops	Varies/Part of country collaboration process
		List of countries where members are collaborating increases + number of members collaborating within countries increases	Yes/Yes
	Influence at national level	<i>Advocacy targets to be determined</i>	No/No
	Sustained local ⁴ service delivery	Members / country collaborations measure service levels using a holistic system strengthening approach	Varies/Focus of this TOR
	Collaboration at global level	Assess collaboration according to Agenda for Change Continuum	Yes/Yes
	Influence at global level	Number of new members & Number of new funders	Yes/Yes
		<i>Advocacy targets to be determined</i>	No/No
	Members' overall alignment with Agenda for Change principles	All members sign commitment letters – leadership commits to joint principles & contributing time to collaboration	Yes/Yes
		<i>Self-assessment TBD</i>	Varies/Varies
		Member websites and/or strategies mention systems strengthening	Yes/Yes
Global Hub's role in supporting collaboration	Time tracking of contribution of Global Hub	Yes/Yes	
	Progress towards Global Hub, Secretariat, and Working Group work plans	Yes/Yes	

³ Adapted from 2019 Agenda for Change Global Hub Work Plan

⁴ Local refers to relevant geopolitical areas but is broader than a single community: e.g., district, country, prefecture, commune

Because answering research questions depend on being able to collect a sufficient amount of data, and we have two phases of work. It is likely there will be a pause between the phases to allow for time to build consensus on the framework to be used.

Table 2 – Research questions, suggested methodology, and deliverables

Research questions	Suggested methodology	Deliverables
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Secretariat to define criteria for peer reviewers - Work with Secretariat to describe expected timeline that can be communicated to Member organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kick-off call and monthly check-in calls with the Secretariat - Research design and report outline⁵
Phase 1 – Data Collection and Framework Development		
What have Agenda for Change members been doing in each country to assess and strengthen the WASH system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some information has been captured already; work with Secretariat to contact relevant Member representatives by email and/or phone; review Member websites and other resources 	Annex with descriptions of activities for each country. Describe nature of collaboration, if any, between members or other NGOs.
What relevant systems information exists at national and subnational levels where Agenda for Change members are doing WASH systems strengthening and in control locations? ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Secretariat to contact relevant Member representatives⁷; locate existing government, academic, or other data sources. 	A database with links to all evidence collected and a shared folder with any data / reports not available online
What existing frameworks for meta-assessment are relevant?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify which indicators are relevant for evaluating against the selected framework 	Suggest framework(s) for approval by peer review group
In which countries is there sufficient evidence for Member work and counterfactuals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider evidence/data collected within expected timeframe.⁸ 	Suggest a subset of countries (we anticipate this will be three to five countries)

⁵ Some of these deliverables can be submitted within the draft / final reports.

⁶ We believe we will be able to find limited data for some control districts for a counterfactual. Some members have been assessing service levels in districts beyond the ones they work in.

⁷ Note that while some Members have extensive data, they might not be able to provide it within the expected timeframes.

⁸ Some evidence will be qualitative, some quantitative, and some presence/absence (e.g., there was no plan/law/regulation in place before this work, and now there is). Thus this study will require flexibility and creativity (i.e., this is not a systematic review with strict criteria about what is included).

Research questions	Suggested methodology	Deliverables
Phase 2 – Analysis		
<p>In subset countries, can we demonstrate a relationship between systems strengthening and improved service levels (in households, schools, clinics) over time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where possible, identify baseline and periodic updates for strength of WASH system in each country at national and/or subnational levels and changes in service levels. - Determine whether and where there has been <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Changes in the strength of the WASH system over time o Changes in water or sanitation service levels over time - Perform multi-factor analysis of 1) WASH service levels 2) strength of the system (e.g., building block score) and 3) GDP per capita (as a relatively strong system in a context of very low GDP is likely to be constrained)⁹ 	<p>Final report includes pieces described above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe relationships if any between systems strength and service levels - Describe whether there is evidence that Member systems strengthening efforts contributed to those changes compared to controls - Benchmark efforts (if possible) across countries <p>A summary presentation (via conference call) to the Steering Committee during one of their meetings.</p>
<p>Identify useful questions for future research</p>	<p>Possible questions include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there indicators that all Members/collaborations should be collecting to inform these questions? - Are there systems strengthening methods that are more or less successful? - Are there tools that Members would recommend for others to use? - Describe methods to take local-level activities to the national level - Analysis of collective action in each country and how successful this has been in engaging with other sector actors - Can we benchmark / compare collective action efforts across countries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include questions and data that could inform these in report - Identify opportunities to improve how we collect and show evidence in the future

⁹ For example, see Figure 4.13 Total Sector Sustainability Score, by Country Wealth, 2015 in [Sustainability Assessment of Rural Water Service Delivery Models: Findings of a Multi-Country Review](#)