EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of

WASH TOOLKIT FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Creating business synergies between customers and organisations to increase use of WASH services and behaviours

TRANSFORM

Safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are crucial to human health and well-being. Safe WASH is not only necessary for improved health and quality of life, but contributes to livelihoods, dignity and other related issues like workforce participation, school attendance, social engagement, and helping create resilient communities.

Small-scale social enterprises around the world are emerging as important contributors to sustainable WASH practices and service delivery for low-income communities and households.

Like with all businesses, ensuring programmes and services successfully scale-up is crucial. For WASH-focused enterprises, this means creating a sustained need for WASH products and supporting increased demand with supply.

Ultimately, a key part of business growth comes down to building relationships. By engaging deeper with the communities they serve, enterprises can better understand their needs, develop trust, increase access and encourage the use of WASH products and services as well as consistent WASH behaviours.

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A RESEARCH-BASED SOLUTION FOR WASH ENTERPRISES

In collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP), TRANSFORM, an impact accelerator led by Unilever, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and EY, has developed a toolkit to help WASH enterprises grow their business by understanding and leveraging the relationships that exist within and around their organisations.

To inform the content of the toolkit, CCP collaborated with Toilet Engineers, a locally owned WASH-focused social enterprise operating from Wa Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, to conduct research between April and September 2023.

The goal of the research was to understand the role of social networks and motivators for spreading information about WASH behaviours and products among members of a community. The research provided evidence on how social enterprises can identify influential people and networks within their customer base and strategically use them to accelerate safe WASH behaviours and increase the demand for related products and services.

By focusing on relationship building as a crucial step in business development, the toolkit helps enterprises understand how communication and information about products and services may flow through their customer base. Customers may influence their communities through information sharing, advocacy, and the purchase of WASH products and services within their community.

Based on insights from the research, this toolkit offers practical steps to help WASH-focused enterprises engage with their customers and develop networks to:

1. Increase their organisation's growth

2. Develop mutually beneficial relationships between service providers and the community

3. Improve community interest and discussion about WASH

4. Stimulate demand for WASH products and services

5. Track and assess progress towards business goals and behaviour change

FOUR ESSENTIAL STEPS TO LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS AND WIDER NETWORKS

Understand how behaviour change and demand creation are linked

Understanding how to create positive behaviour change is essential for WASH enterprises to successfully create demand and ensure business longevity.
By building relationships with and leveraging insights from customers, WASH enterprises can design more effective and tailored products, resulting in higher adoption rates and improved public health outcomes.

INSIGHT 1 Behaviour change for business growth is a two-way street. Small businesses may have to reassess their priorities and the way they do business by changing their perceptions and interactions with their market base, how they design programmes and use their evidence strategically to achieve their objectives.

INSIGHT 2 Behaviour change is dependent in part on effective communication, which helps a shift in perceptions, attitudes and actions. The quality of communication contributes to the success of the change that enterprises can achieve.

INSIGHT 3 Behaviour change is never a one-off exercise – one small change in habit can have a ripple effect. For example, increased demand for toilets for women and girls could lead to increased demand for sanitary products. Enterprises should consider strategies to meet increased demand and support desired changes in behaviour.

Define and understand the customer base

Mapping out actors and key influencers within the target customer's community helps social enterprises identify the individuals or groups that can increase visibility, interest and use of their services or products.

INSIGHT 1 Go beyond the traditional actors that influence the success of WASH initiatives. For example, in Ghana, the research identified that tenants of residential houses and religious leaders have high levels of influence on the use of WASH products and services. It also identified new actors including non-traditional groups such as artisans and steel benders, food vendors and market women, among others.

INSIGHT 2 Increase interpersonal interactions with the customer base. While enterprises can work out customer needs based on experience and third-party research, they should not overlook the power of face-to-face engagements. Implement activities such as house-to-house visits, post-service follow-ups, and meetings with community-based religious and social groups to hear from customers first-hand.

STEP 3

Develop strategies to leverage the power of communication

Increased opportunities for interactions and discussions about WASH help drive demand for WASH products and services.

INSIGHT 1 Past customers often have the greatest reach and power to influence new customers. Enterprises should prioritise customer communication and segment their past customers based on demographics or purchase history, so they can easily tailor communications to their interests.

INSIGHT 2 Media allows existing and future customers to 'see' their friends, family, neighbours and others like them using WASH products. This visible 'word of mouth' gives them the social permission to try innovations.

INSIGHT 3 Trust and respect are determining factors for people when choosing with whom to discuss WASH-related needs. In addition to direct interpersonal engagement, enterprises could develop business promotion messages that are customer-facing and address customers' emotional and practical needs.

INSIGHT 4 Enterprises should commit to providing regular updates to stakeholders, like customers and partners, and be open to receiving feedback.

Monitor progress for evidence and benchmark for improvements

Evidence is important for successfully engaging and building relationships. Customers need evidence to make purchase decisions, funders need it to justify their support to impact enterprises, and organisations need it to identify priorities and develop relevant interventions.

INSIGHT 1 Businesses can only grow what they measure. Start with simple KPIs that a team can easily adopt and incorporate into business operations. Use KPIs to assess both successes and failures by providing critical insights into how well an enterprise is performing, whether it is meeting its objectives, and what actions can be taken to improve performance. Use customer relationship management (CRM) tools to track progress and revise KPIs objectively and systematically.

INSIGHT 2 WASH-focused social enterprises can consider three broad KPI areas to cover various aspects of their business operation: **1. Financial performance**, **2. Organisational performance**, and **3. Health promotion and behaviour change of customers**. All staff members within a WASH enterprise should understand their role in monitoring and enhancing the progress of the business, and using the data to maintain good relationships with customers and other stakeholders.

INSIGHT 3 Track customer interactions along the full product or service life cycle. Customer interactions could happen at multiple points – before, during, and after the product or service is offered, so enterprises should consider implementing multiple data collection approaches, tools, and time points.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR WASH ENTERPRISES?

Behaviour change is essential to expand the reach of WASH businesses and accelerate their impact on communities. Promoting safe and healthy WASH practices can influence increased sales and revenue, and can strengthen continuous engagement with customers who seek service maintenance, make business referrals to their family members and friends, and consider purchasing new products.

Traditionally, behaviour change initiatives focus on 'downstream' audiences such as individuals and families who benefit directly from WASH products and services. It is important to consider also the contributions from those who can carry the message and bring a unique influence, for example, businesses, leaders of community groups, landlords, tenants and more.

The private sector can play a key part in WASH initiatives, and bring additional capacity, funding and connections, which may result in a mindset shift for those involved.

Collaboration between WASH enterprises and the wider private sector can allow impact enterprises to scale their business faster through implementing community engagement for behavioural change initiatives, while the private sector can contribute to better public health and quality of life. The benefits are mutual.

Enterprises can download the **full toolkit here**, to build better connections and synergies between users and providers.