A Collective Impact initiative is a long-term commitment by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.

Since 2002, the MWA has grown in size and impact. This growth is fueled by leveraging critical benefits to their partners—and more importantly, the communities they work in.

5 Conditions for Collective Success

- Mutually Reinforcing Activities
- Shared Measurement Systems
- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Support Organizations
- Common Agenda

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The MWA began implementing WASH programs in 5 regions of Ethiopia in March 2004. MWA-EP members and local partners include CARE, CRS, Food for the Hungry (FH), Hope 2000, Kalebewot Church (EKHC), Ethiopian Evangelical Church-Mekane Yesus (EECYM), Living Water International, Lifewater International, Relief Society of Tigray, Water Action, WaterAid, WaterPartners International (now water.org), and World Vision. The program has been funded by USAID Ethiopia, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Coca-Cola Foundation, community contributions, and other matching funds. In July 2011, the MWA-EP began a new, 3-year integrated WASH program, funded with $6 million from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and an additional $6 million from several other donors.

Examples of Knowledge Transfer

- Multiple Use of Water
- Integrating Wind Power
- Law Case
- Invasive Tip for GTS Practices
- Care
- Disaster Dog Well Technique
- World Vision
- New Sanitation Campaign Techniques
- WaterAid
- Incense Generation from HW

Rationale for the Collective Impact Study

The objective was to evaluate the theory that working in an alliance can contribute to broader systemic change and impact. The Collective Impact Report aimed to document MWA’s effectiveness in the field and provide concrete evidence of the value-added of working in coalition and the 2 conditions of collective success. While the evaluation focused on partnership overall, it is viewed through the lens of the MWA-EP, because it is MWA’s longest-running program, has multiple and changing partners and support from public and private donors.

Karen Davis, Executive Director of Improve International, led the study as an independent evaluator. The study encompassed:

- A comprehensive review of internal programmatic documents and data and external evaluations;
- Interviews with 28 program stakeholders; 13 in the U.S. and 15 in Ethiopia; and
- Field visits in July 2012.

Skills in partnership result in greater impacts than working independently.

It is difficult to assess how successfully the partnership has achieved effective impacts and sustainable outcomes because the end of implementation and ex-post evaluations do not use the same indicators or the same locations. The MWA-EP partners are now collecting in-depth data under a common monitoring platform; once those data are received, it should be possible to provide more quantitative analysis of impact in future iterations of this report.

The partners and other stakeholders need to clearly determine the best role for the MWA; that is, where they can best fill gaps or add value. This would in turn determine how to set up country programs and other activities most efficiently.

Evaluate the MWA Collective Impact Through the Years

- Partnership Improvement Over Time
- Board/Professionally Managed
- Common Agenda
- Shared Measurement Systems
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities
- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Support Organization

The MWA has great potential in developing a robust evidence base for best practices. Yet there is a much more ambitious role for which the MWA is well suited. The world is changing rapidly, with climate change, urbanization, food insecurity, water scarcity, and rural and urban critical issues. All of these will challenge or opportunities for the MWA sector. This is an excellent time for the MWA-EP to lead the sector in considering next practices (which are forward looking).

Advocate to the Sector

MWA should collaborate with other sector conveners to engage major WASH donors in the conversation about next practices. As the methods and outcomes of learning are better documented, MWA should purposefully share this powerful evidence to advocate for the power of partnership.

Expand Collaboration With Members

Interviewees see the MWA as a generator of resources, a leader of advocacy, and as a facilitator of learning, rather than simply coordinating implementation and reporting. Because there are so many strong opinions on the ideal roles of the MWA and secretariats, it is strongly recommended that a facilitated global summit be held to determine the most useful roles moving forward.

Systematize and Prioritize Learning

The MWA is particularly well positioned to make a comparison of alternative approaches, their costs and benefits over time, and the scalability of their methods, which would be useful to the sector. The MWP Ethiopia Secretariat should coordinate the selection of priority learning themes to discuss at the Program Management Group meetings and ensure systematic follow-up.

Seek Diversified and Flexible Resources

The MWA should seek to diversify funding sources and encourage donors to be more flexible (i.e., matching, schedules, cost escalation). MWA should lead the sector in working with donors on creative funding arrangements that stagger funding for hygiene and sanitation promotion for a few years beyond water supply activities.

Monitor and Evaluate Rigorously to Prove Impact

Follow up each phase of the program with end of project and post-project evaluations that can be compared to baseline evaluations. This is the only real way to document impact and to understand what is working and what needs improvement. In turn, those reports should be finalized and shared publicly: results and information can be used in advocacy efforts. Also, it is strongly recommended that all partners to commit to measuring at least a small set of indicators the same way, in the same places, over at least 3 years to be able to determine true progress.

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"[Although] we work for different organizations...we share our experiences, our designs, we help each other with even our relationships with the government." Bekele Abaie, CRS

Theory of Change

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If you want to go Fast, go ALONE.

If you want to go Far, go TOGETHER.

*Image Credits: CRS/Susan Davis (International Development)