



Rural Village Water Resources Management Project Phase III



RVWRMP cooperation with RMs: Best Practices, experiences and lessons learnt

(Research and Study Report)

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Abbreviations

BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CGD	Child, Gender and Disable friendly
DMM	Dignified Menstrual Management
DoLI	Department of Local Infrastructure
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DWS	Department of Water Supply
DWSSM	Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management
EU	European Union
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoF	Government of Finland
GoN	Government of Nepal
GWRO	Gaopalika Water Resource Officer
IEC	Information Education and Communication
LO	Livelihood Officer
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MIS	Management Information System
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
MUS	Multiple Use Water System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
O&M	Operation and Management
PSU	Project Management Unit
RM	Rural Municipality
RME	Rural Municipality Executive
RMPMC	Rural Municipality Project Management Committee
SBS	Step-by-Step Project Planning and Implementation Process Guideline
SHP	School Management Committee
TF	Technical Facilitator
UC	Users' Committee
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WQ	Water Quality
WRA	Water Resource Advisor (Project Technical Assistance)
WRE	Water Resource Engineer
WUMP	Water Use Master Plan
WUSC	Water User Sanitation Committee

Executive Summary

The Rural Village Water Resources Management Project (RVWRMP) started close cooperation with Rural Municipalities (RMs) as soon as the new local level governments were truly established in 2017. The project considers itself as a pioneer of RM cooperation, being one of the first, if not the first, significant partner in the whole country, starting the collaboration right away when it was first possible. After five years of cooperation, RVWRMP can rightfully declare that the collaboration has been successful. The project has witnessed and cultivated a huge potential in the RMs regarding local development especially in WASH and livelihoods sectors, giving hope to the citizens and power to democratically administrate local issues and resources. This report elaborates the reasons and rationale for the successful cooperation, as well describes the experiences from both RM and project sides. The objective of this report is to 1) describe the best RVWRMP practices as a pioneer of cooperation with RMs, and 2) to study the experiences and lessons learnt from the cooperation on both RM and project sides.

In order to study the **best practices** of RM cooperation, the report is based on elaboration of the existing project modalities and collaborative practices with RMs. The project recommends the utilisation of the best practices introduced in this report, including the roles of memoranda of understanding; RM Project Management Committee; fund flow mechanism through the country's budget, channelled via municipal budgets; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Board and WASH Unit concepts developed and pioneered by the project as the structure for managing the sector in RMs; Users' Committee networks that link the community level WASH with the RMs; development of online geospatial information based RM WASH Management Information System (MIS) that is directly linked with online National WASH Management Information System; water quality testing and management; RM policy development in WASH, livelihoods, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), and Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (CCA/DRM) among other themes; as well as the plethora of capacity development activities the project has conducted at RM level including workshops on Women as Decision Makers and Gender and Disability Responsive Planning and Budgeting; CCA/DRR; WASH Management Policy; School WASH and Total Sanitation; and RM WASH MIS.

The project has poured significant resources to develop the RMs' capacity and institutions since 2017. RMs are now the foremost implementation partners and beneficiaries of the project. The best practices mentioned above are all applied only since the middle of the third phase, reflecting the project's capacity to adapt its operations to provide best possible support based on the needs beyond those outlined in the project result indicators and the project document. The project recommends all implementing actors to focus on developing RM capacity in WASH as the work with the RMs has significantly improved the sustainability of RM WASH sector and livelihood interventions overall.

Regarding **experiences and lessons learnt**, 21 RMs and 32 implementing project staff were interviewed and their responses analysed. Concrete implementation of WASH, irrigation, and livelihoods including the related capacity development activities at community level; policy development and WASH planning; institutional development of WASH Board and Unit; as well as values such as sustainability, transparency, commitment, and quality of work, as well as GESI, were highlighted as the core of the collaboration. The established RM WASH Boards and Units are expected to continue managing RM WASH sector after the project end. Both RM and project staff had clearly internalised the concepts, including the roles and responsibilities. RMs have also adopted several project modalities including the Step-by-Step guideline for water supply scheme implementation, procurement guideline, and public auditing. These modalities

have provided the RMs with the means to manage WASH schemes in practical terms and several of the RMs have expressed that they also apply these guidelines to other sectors of the RM than the WASH sector.

Both RM and project staff reported that the main challenge in the RM is the lack of human resources and capacity of the RM staff. The project has contributed significantly to alleviate both these issues through the 'best practices' but at larger scale this can be only improved by putting much more effort to quality education in the country. Project staff furthermore saw political influence as a major challenge. Collaboration with the provincial level was also alarmingly poor: the provinces do not involve the RMs in the activities they implement in the municipality, and there is a lack of coordination and communication between the government levels. A much better coordination, communication, mutual planning, and implementation as per RM priorities are needed to overcome the problems.



Photo: RM representatives in the interview for the study in Aalital Rural Municipality.

1. Introduction and objectives

The Rural Village Water Resources Management Project has strong links and a long history of working with the local government level. The project has worked in the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and livelihoods sectors since 2006. The first two phases were completed in 2010 and 2016, while the current third phase with joint funding from the Governments of Nepal and Finland as well as the EU is set to finish in 2022. Phase III works in four result areas: WASH; livelihoods; renewable energy and climate change; and governance support. In practice, this means WASH and livelihoods implementation in close collaboration with RMs at scale, along with constant capacity building of the local government and in communities.

In 2015 Nepal promulgated a new Constitution, creating a new local government structure, devolving resources, powers and mandates for service provision to the local level municipalities. Municipal governments were elected in 2017, replacing the previous government structure where Districts and Villages were the main local units of public governance.

As provisioned in the Constitution of Nepal and the Local Government Operation Act 2074, local governments are responsible for the WASH service delivery to the citizens. Rural Municipalities have the authority to promulgate policies and regulate water systems accordingly. To perform this function, local governments need to develop local regulations, institutions and partnerships. The local governments should have strategic and viable management for operation and maintenance (O&M) and management of water supply systems, as well as implementing Total Sanitation and Dignified Menstruation Management.

RVWRMP started close cooperation with Rural Municipalities (RMs) as soon as the new local level governments were established in 2017, channelling the investment and recurrent funding via the municipal system. RVWRMP has very successfully worked in collaboration with local governments in 10 districts of Nepal (Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Dailekh Doti, Darchula, Humla and Kailali). The Project has a role in assisting the evolving local level governments to become effective service provision entities and strengthen their capacity to govern. The project considers itself as a pioneer of RM cooperation, being one of the first, if not the first, significant partner in the whole country starting the collaboration with the new structures right away when it was first possible.

After five years of cooperation, RVWRMP can rightfully declare that the collaboration has been successful. The project has navigated the first years with an emerging RM structure that was not by any means ready or adequate for carrying out the new given administrative, political, and sectoral tasks. Despite this, the project has witnessed and cultivated a huge potential in the RMs regarding local development, especially in the WASH and livelihoods sectors, giving hope to the citizens and power to democratically administrate local issues and resources.

By now, the project has poured significant amount of its resources to develop RMs capacity and institutions, RM now being the foremost partner and beneficiaries of the project. This was done despite the fact that the Project Document or Result Indicators did not require it, reflecting the project's capacity to adapt its operations to provide best possible support based on the needs, beyond the minimum requirements. The work with the RMs has significantly improved the sustainability of the RM WASH sector and livelihood interventions overall, being also one of the main drivers of the successful cooperation.

The final 12 months of such a long-term project presents the ideal opportunity to look back and analyse the more long-term impacts the Project has provoked overall, and which transformative changes could be encountered in the working area. The overall objective of the studies conducted in the final year is to include additional learnings, impacts, and transformative changes in completion reporting and institutionalise the legacy of RVRWMP through the production of documents that can be circulated with wider audiences even after the project has closed.

This report seeks to elaborate the reasons and rationales of the successful cooperation, as well find out the experiences from both RM and project sides. The objective of this report is to:

1. Describe the best RVWRMP practices as a pioneer of cooperation with RMs.
2. Study the experiences and lessons learnt from the cooperation on both RM and project sides.

This report has two main result sections: The first result section elaborated the best practices of RVWRMP with RMs, browsing through the modalities and broad set of implemented activities with the RMs at RM level. The second section consists of results from questionnaires and interactions between the project and the RMs. This includes a questionnaire-based elaboration of RM staff experiences, as well as a questionnaire-based elaboration of RVWRMP staff experiences, complemented with interview quotes of RM representatives from joint workshop events.

2. Methods

This report is based on elaboration of the existing project modalities and collaborative practices with RMs, as well as reflecting both RM representatives' and project staffers' experiences and opinions about the cooperation. The best project modalities and practices are described in Section 3. The descriptions utilize existing project materials wherever possible, but also involve reflections based on the experiences over the years.

The experiences are described in Section 4. They are based on two separate surveys conducted in late 2021 – early 2022 (one questionnaire for RM representatives in core RMs, and another for RVWRMP staff) and related interviews with RM representatives. We asked 20 questions from representatives of 21 RMs, involving typically the Chair, Vice Chair, a number of ward chairs, and some sector chiefs and officers. We asked similarly 20 questions to project staff from the TSUs in 6 districts as well as the WASH Unit staff in each of the core RMs. The staff in each of the units worked together to answer the questionnaire thus a total of 32 responses were received. Additional information about the experiences was received from previous collections of interviews by the project.

3. Best practices of RVWRMP with RMs

The following sub-sections describe most of the project's collaborative activities with RMs. These practices include managerial and administrative processes as well as implementation related processes. Among many innovations, these include development of WASH Board and Unit concepts with the Municipalities, designed from the start as municipality structures approved by the RM Council. The concepts were first piloted in two RMs and then scaled up to include all core RMs. All project policies are also developed together with Municipalities and approved by RM Councils. Furthermore, many of the project's implementation modalities have been eventually adopted and used by RMs as their own modalities, including the Step-by-Step Approach and the procurement guideline, as well as construction related manuals (not separately considered in this section).

3.1 Memoranda of Understanding

DoLI, as the governmental partner in Nepal, signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an RM on behalf of RVWRMP. This ensures a formal mandate to cooperate and channel funds through the RMs, as well as describing general means of implementation and working modalities with the RM. The MoU has supported the project and the RM to go in the right track during project implementation. It binds the partners to follow the project's policies and describes the budget allocation mechanisms and fund flows.

The MoU spells out the rules and responsibilities through which the RMs must operate when collaborating with the project. It sets guidelines on scheme selection, following the Water Use Master Plan (WUMP), monitoring and reporting mechanisms, project management in the RM, accounts management through SUTRA (the Government accounts system), good governance and transparency, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles, quality of construction, human resources management, annual performance evaluation system of the RMs, assets management, coordination and cooperation at various levels, and financial management of the Water Resources Development Fund (WRDF) as well as the RM's financial contribution. Section 3.3 provides a description of these aspects.

3.2 RMPMC

The Rural Municipality Project Management Committee (RMPMC) is established to manage and coordinate the implementation works and the Annual Work Plan (AWP) budget in the RM. RMPMCs make implementation related decisions of the project at RM level, based on the AWP. They are responsible for planning, administration and management of all the Project activities. The RMPMC meets at least once a month to review the progress of Project activities in the RM and discuss other relevant matters. The composition of the RMPMCs also incorporates the key sections of the RM that are related to project result areas. They are also responsible for the recruitments at RM level, and they approve the AWP at RM level. The members of the RMPMC include the following:

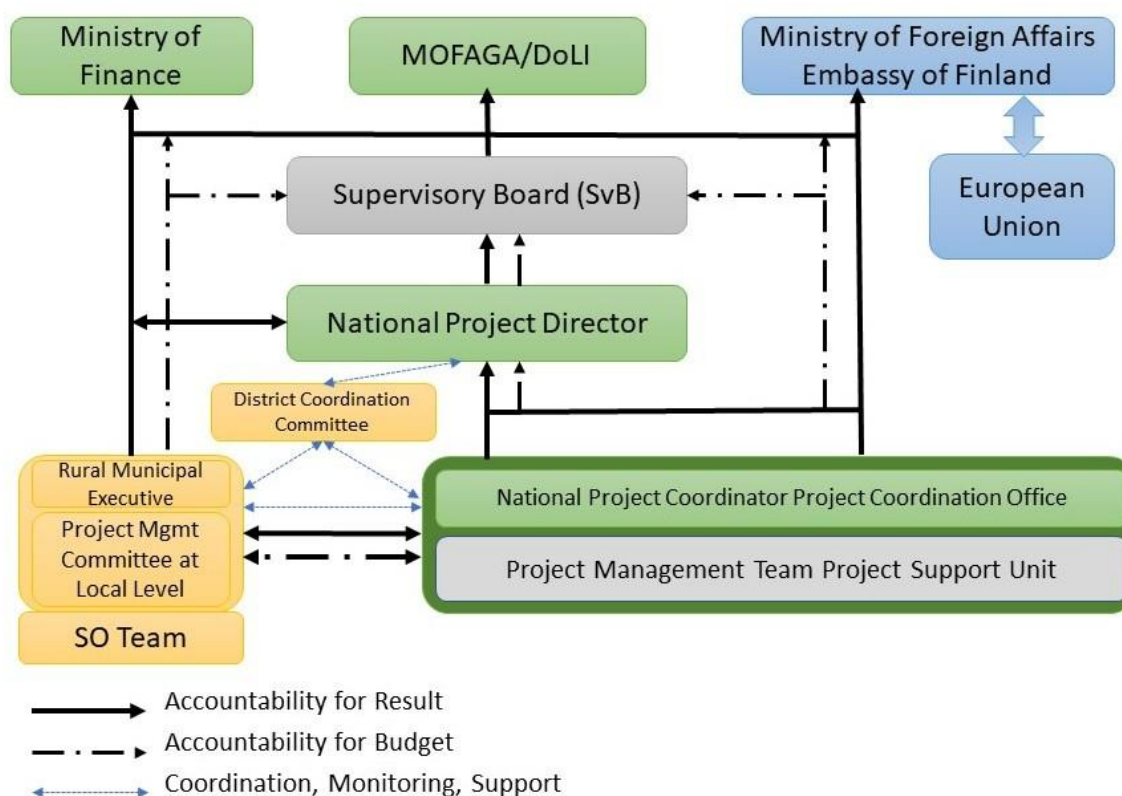
- Rural Municipality Chairperson (Chairperson)
- Rural Municipality Vice-Chairperson or female member (in case the vice chairperson is not female)
- Water Resources Advisor of the Project
- Infrastructure Development Section Chief of RM
- Chief of relevant sections of the RM, such as Agriculture, Cottage and small industries, Women's development, Soil conservation, Irrigation, Forestry, Cooperatives
- Gaopalka Water Resource Officer (GWRO), non-voting member
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of RM, member secretary

The quorum of RMPMC consists of the RM Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, CAO and WRA. Infrastructure development section of RM oversees the technical matters of the RM and is responsible for the monitoring of technical matters in investment schemes and providing support to communities.

In practice, RMPMCs have been able to ensure fluent implementation of the project activities and infrastructure construction, as well as to manage recruitments and human resources, supported to develop RM related policies. RM Chairs are incorporated in the committees, which makes the implementation of the decisions in the RM Council easy. Overall, the committees have successfully supported project implementation.

3.3 Fund flow mechanism and (increasing) RM contribution

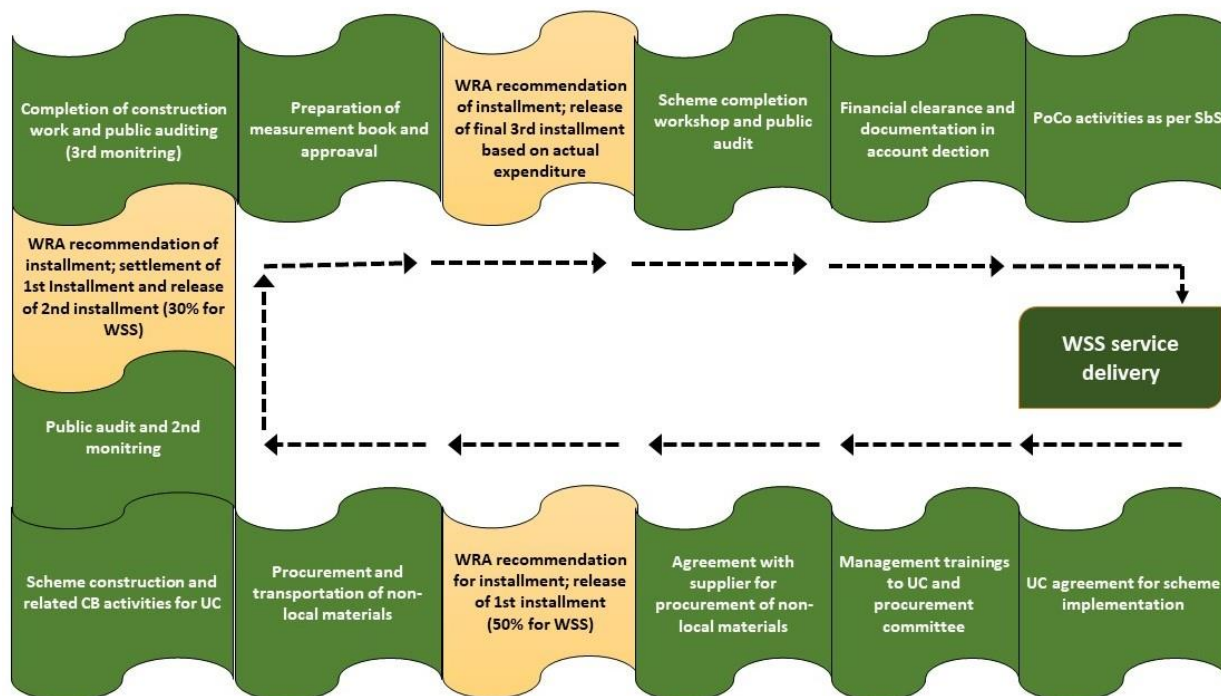
RVWRMP is fully aligned with the government budgeting system. RVWRMP produces an annual work plan in the last half of the fiscal year and sends that to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to be included in the central government budget. The Government of Nepal (GoN) share is released from the central treasury to the RMs as a part of the annual conditional grant that the RMs receive from the central level. All funds flow through the RM budget.



The GoN contribution is channelled from the central budget as a part of regular funding to the RM level, whereas the international donor contribution is channelled to the RM level through the implementing consultant (FCG) account in Nepal. The International donors also support the Technical Assistance that is in practice managed by the Project Support Unit (PSU). The role of the technical assistance is to ensure good governance, transparency, and quality of work in the project, bringing in new technical ideas where

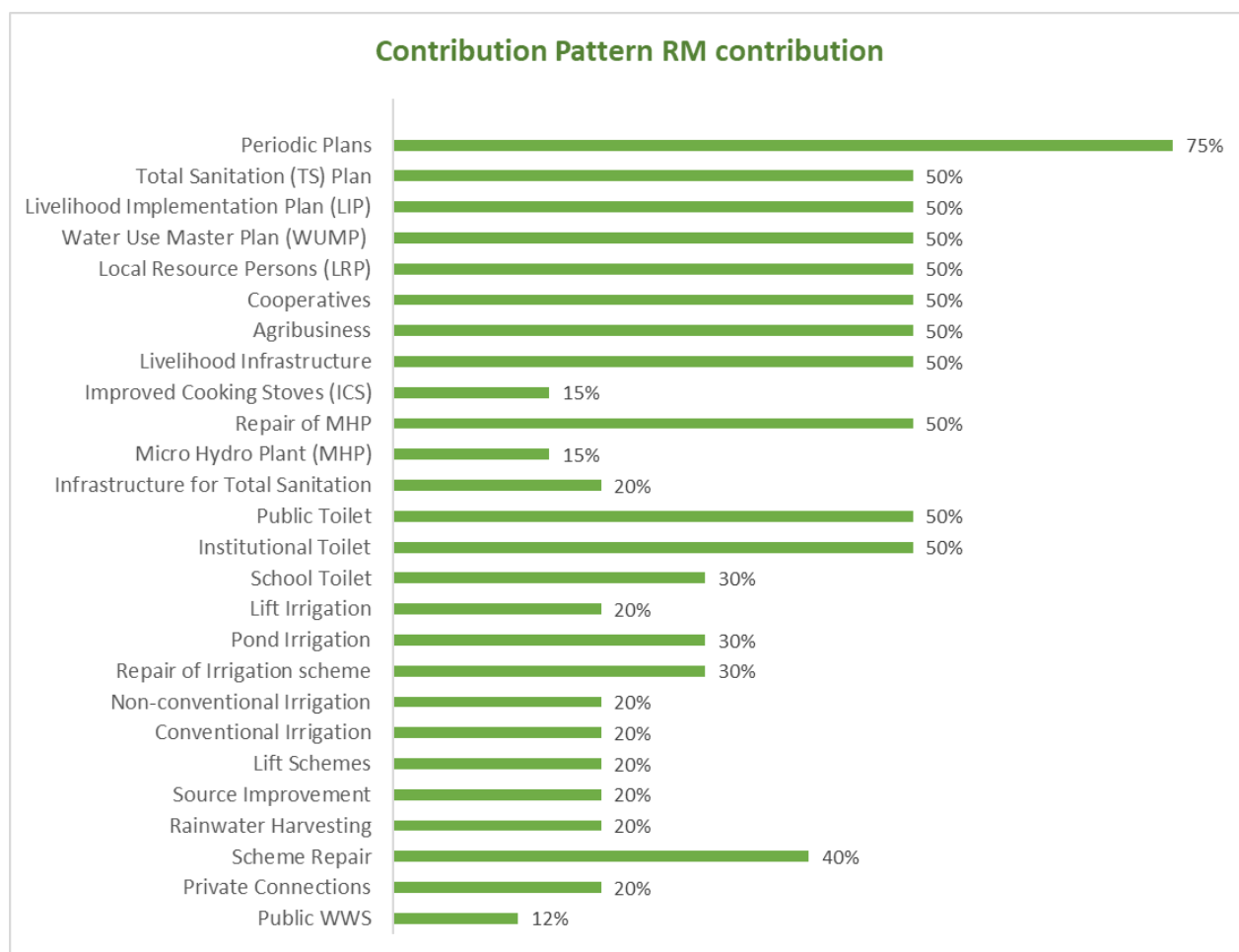
feasible from local and international experience. In addition, the technical assistance manages the project implementation, human resources, and fund flows. The project fund is a conditional grant within RM budget that comes from the central government, which means that RM cannot implement it beyond what has been agreed in the approved AWP. The project AWP budget lines are part of the RM's annual budget.

Fund release process from RM to UC



The TA Water Resources Advisor (WRA), as a member of RMPMC, has the obligation to recommend all payments of instalments to community level. Without his/her recommendation, the funds cannot be utilized. This has ensured proper utilization of the funds as per the AWP - getting value for money, transparency and quality of work. Ultimately this contributes to maintaining good governance. The modality is well trusted by RM officials and therefore there are no regular delays in payments and UCs get the payments in time.

Initially, RMs were expected to follow the earlier fund contribution patterns agreed with the Village Development Committees (VDCs) - the earlier administrative structure that the project dealt with. According to those MoU, RMs (as with VDCs) were originally expected to contribute at least 7% of the investments in WSS, irrigation, IWM, recharge ponds; MHP 10%, ICS, agribusiness 6%; public toilets 50%; school toilets 11% (later increased to 12%). TS and other activities as per AWP. In reality, the RMs soon voluntarily increased their contribution to a much higher level. On average, the RMs contribution reached 20% over the whole Phase III, increasing to 24% in the last year of implementation. This happened as they trusted and became familiar with the project and its results. The project's monitoring mechanisms, fund flow mechanisms, quality of work was found to be good. RMs started taking RVWRMP as an opportunity to get things done with good quality and on time, with a reasonable RM contribution. In the current Project Implementation Guideline (PIG), the contribution pattern is the following:



3.4 WASH Board and WASH Unit

To institutionalize WASH in governance, the project has developed the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Board concept together with Rural Municipalities (RMs). The major objective of the concept is to ensure sustainable management of the WASH services. The concept was shaped as the way forward for sustainable management of WASH services. The concept also resulted in the formulation of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Directive 2077 for all 27 core RMs. The Directive is based on the Local Government Operation Act, 2074. Actions as provisioned in the directive are already moving ahead in all 27 core RMs.

As provisioned in the WASH Management Directive of the RMs, WASH Management Boards were established as a formal entity in all 27 core RMs. The structure of the Board is mentioned in the directive. In most of the RMs, RM Chairpersons are chairing the Board.

Role of the WASH Management Board: The main responsibility of the WASH Management Board is to promote WASH governance at the local level. The main duties of the Board are presented below:

- Prepare periodic plans on WASH with a clear vision.
- Prepare annual planning with budgeting of WASH sector.
- Support the Rural Municipal Executive (RME) for policy formulation regarding the WASH sector.
- Establish and operationalize the RM-WASH Management Information System (MIS).

- Establish and operationalize the RM level WASH repair and maintenance fund.
- Ensure functionality and sustainability of water supply systems.
- Prepare and fund relevant Total Sanitation and hygiene related activities, aiming to achieve total sanitised status of the RM.
- Prepare and fund relevant sanitation programmes for the public.
- Manage institutional and school sanitation in the RM.
- Prepare targeted programmes for Dignified Menstruation Management, aiming for full coverage in RM.

The WASH Board establishes a system for regular monitoring and evaluation. The Board monitors the functionality and sustainability status of the schemes, institutional setup of WUSCs, total sanitation status, menstruation management practices (access to toilet and tap during the period) and home garden management status. The monitoring visits verify the reported data and highlight the possible need for support to WUSCs. Based on the verified data of the WUSC reports, WASH Unit evaluates the WUSCs. The best performing WUSCs may receive a reward, to be decided by the Board, to encourage them to maintain the WUSC's performance.

The WASH Unit works under the supervision of the WASH Board as the operative body and the secretariat. The role of the WASH Unit is to:

- Implement and coordinate sanitation, hygiene and dignified menstruation management related programmes, identified in the annual work plans.
- Monitor, facilitate and supervise assigned individuals, volunteers, schools, youth clubs, mothers' groups, and community-based organisations in WASH management.
- Establish and update the RM-level WASH MIS and provide accurate figures for the Board for evidence-based decision making.
- Compile Water Use and Sanitation Committees (WUSCs) functionality status reports with data and proposals submitted by the ward offices. Update these to the MIS and submit summary report to the Board with proposed action plans. Follow up with wards if the reports are not received.
- Facilitate to form or reshuffle WUSCs and support them to register/renew in the RM.
- Support WUSCs for operation and maintenance management of the schemes and monitor performance.
- Identify the best managed schemes and recommend WUSCs to the Board for an annual reward. Provide targeted support to passive WUSCs including WUSC reshuffling, WUSC management training, and other actions that can trigger a passive WUSC to be more active.
- Establish periodic monitoring and evaluation system of existing water supply schemes.
- Prepare Annual Report on WASH and submit to the Board.
- Recommend WUSCs for funding of emergency and major repairs to the Board.
- Perform any other activities as decided by the Board for sustainable WASH services for all citizens.
- Carry out administrative work for the Board (minutes, invitations, reports, WUSC registration, etc.)

RM repair and maintenance funds are established in each RM to support the WUSCs in sustainable scheme maintenance. Based on an assessment, the WASH Management Board may recommend any of the schemes to RM Executive body for repair and maintenance after ensuring the following pre-conditions:

- WUSC has an O&M Plan and Water Safety Plan, and related O&M regulation is approved and applied at the time of registration and renewal.
- WUSC is registered at the RM and registration is renewed annually.
- WUSC has the O&M fund and collects regular water tariff (considering exceptions only for the poor and other who are in a disadvantaged situation).
- WUSC manages tools and spare parts.
- WUSC has appointed a water system maintenance worker.
- WUSC conducts Annual General Meeting and public audit.
- WUSC maintains book-keeping and store records.

3.5 UC networks and UC reporting to the RM

The project has supported the establishment of WUSC Networks in the RMs. The chairperson of the network is nominated as a member of the WASH Management Board. WUSC Networks work as a bridge between WUSCs, the WASH Management Board and other donor institutions. They identify the issues and problems related to the O&M of water supply systems, and they seek solutions. In particular, the network has an advocacy and supporting role for institutional capacity enhancement of WUSCs and functionality and sustainability management of water supply and sanitation schemes. All the schemes are entitled to be affiliated with the WUSC Network. WUSCs are encouraged to affiliate with viable local cooperative to accumulate O&M fund and to receive other WASH management support services.

WUSCs submit the scheme status report during the first quarter of each fiscal year to the ward office. This report updates any scheme-specific information regarding functionality of the scheme, institutional arrangement of WUSCs, total sanitation status, menstruation management practices (access to toilet and tap during the period) and home garden management. Any proposals for emergency repairs, service level improvements or other support needed from the WASH Unit should be submitted together with the status report. The Ward Office forwards these to the WASH Unit. A copy is submitted to the WUSC Network and affiliated cooperative. The report may include special attention need to be taken by the Board or WUSC network.

3.6 RM WASH MIS and National WASH MIS

The WASH Unit is responsible for establishing and updating the RM WASH Management Information System (MIS). The Unit is to provide accurate figures for the Board for evidence-based decision making. The RM WASH MIS is to be linked with the National WASH MIS (NWASH MIS). After receiving reports from the WUSCs through ward offices, the WASH Unit verifies the data by conducting monitoring visits. The verified data is compiled and updated into the RM WASH MIS accordingly.

The project support to the NWASH MIS with the idea that RMs can use the portal and the data for WASH management. The Ministry of Water Supply, through its Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management (DWSSM), have made a big effort to develop a National MIS of WASH components. Originally, the project document of RVWRMP did not have a plan to conduct the NWASH survey but considered the idea of an RM-MIS. Later, the project realized that it should support the NWASH due to the good information it had at RM level. After DoLI and DWSSM signed a MoU to promote National MIS and NWASH in RVWRMP's core RMs, the project gave emphasis to the NWASH component and linked its RM-MIS with NWASH.

The project continues to support the RMs for NWASH MIS development, expecting that the NWASH portal will remain actively developed under the line ministry and that it will provide a foundation for municipal WASH data in the future. The project believes the investment in data collection and the NWASH portal development has been worthwhile as it is currently the most feasible candidate for a long-term national WASH MIS system. National level NWASH staff have been very positive about the high-quality work done by RVWRMP.

3.7 Water quality management at RMs

Each RM needs to establish a water quality lab at RM level to test water quality of each WASH system, charging a minimum fee. The project has promoted water quality laboratories in the RMs. They are operated under the health section. The idea is to enable the existence of simple water quality testing in the RMs. The ideal would be to enable water testing twice a year in all schemes. In total, the project has established 27 labs, one in each core working RM. The established labs receive water safety and quality measurement trainings.

3.8 Formal RM policy development

The position of local governments is laid out in Schedule 8 of the Constitution of Nepal (2015), and further elaborated in the Local Government Operation Act 2074. Local governments are self-governed and can formulate and promulgate local regulations, policies, directives, and manuals. In this regard, the project capacitated RMs and influence their policies on WASH, livelihoods and GESI. The Project supported core RMs to formulate the policies for Operation and Maintenance Management of Water Supply Schemes, and Dignified Menstruation Management. The project has encouraged the core RMs to formulate the relevant policies to regulate the implementation of WASH and livelihoods activities.

RM policies

#	Name of the policy	RM policies formulated
1	Water Sanitation and Hygiene Management Directive	27
2	Dignified Menstruation Management Directive	24
3	RM Level Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme Repair Fund Operation Procedure	15
4	Water Resources Act	15
5	Water Resources Regulation	27
6	Total Sanitation Promotion Procedure	3
7	Water Resources Management Procedure	3
8	Water Supply and Sanitation Regulation	2
9	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Procedure	4
10	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Strategic Plan	2
11	Users Committee Formation and Mobilization Procedure	6
12	User Committee Formation Procedure	3
13	Agricultural Enterprises Promotion Act	8
14	Agricultural and Livestock Programme Operation Procedure	2
15	Cooperative Act	15
16	Support Person and WASH Unit Operation Procedure	2
17	Cooperative Regulation	3
Total Policies Formulated		161

3.9 Capacity development activities of the project at RM level

RVWRMP has supported the following capacity development activities at RM level. The activities are described in detail in training manuals and their impacts are reflected in Progress Reports of the project.

Major activities:

Workshop on Women as Decision Makers and Gender and Disability Responsive Planning and Budgeting Workshop including review (3 days, review 2 days). The purpose of the training is to identify existing gender issues, and problems related to disabilities, in five thematic areas: women at home, women and money, women in leadership positions, women in agriculture, and women in service provision. Participants involve women representatives of RM, female staff of RM, female social activists, female leader farmers, and other interested local women. Based on the participatory analysis, a gender and disability responsible plan is drafted in line with the 7-step planning process of the RM. Based on this, the women suggest content for gender responsive budgets of the RM councils. Activities are reviewed annually to assess the status of their implementation. Around 50% of the proposed gender responsive activities, and 20% of the disability related activities (which were begun later) were implemented by the end of FY06.

CCA/DRR Workshop (3d). The purpose of this workshop is to identify localities that are prone to natural hazards in the municipality and prepare a tentative action plan. It supports preservation of the water sources and water supply systems as well. Participants are RM officials, politicians, and project staff. It orients the participants to the subject and potentially supports planning to adapt to the impacts of the climate change in agriculture. It also supports further community level planning for possible disasters.

WASH Management Policy Consultation Workshop with RME (1d). The main objective is to institutionalise the concept for sustainable WASH service management and planning. Under the policy, WASH Boards, WASH Units, WASH O&M funds, UC networks are being established in the RM. It also supports the N WASH maintenance and water quality lab establishment. It is thus a basis for the best practices described above.

Orientation on WASH Management Board Concept (1d). The goal is to orient relevant RM entities to WASH Board concept. Participants include WASH Board and RME members.

School WASH and Total Sanitation workshop (RM and district level) (2d). In this workshop, selected students, parents and teachers work together as a team to draft a school WASH management guideline and planning actions to achieve the national Three Star WASH standards in the schools. They are first oriented to the subjects, followed by participatory preparation of plans.

RM/N WASH related trainings: RM/N WASH Application Training to Enumerator & IT Officers of RMs (3d); N-WASH data validation workshop (2d) and N-WASH Planning workshop (1-2d). To prepare the National WASH plan and to collect general WASH status information in the RMs, the project has organised several training and workshops at RM level. The first training enabled survey follow-up and data entry to the N-WASH system. The validation workshop allowed field data validation, and finally WASH planning workshop utilises the collected data and information system to support WASH sector planning for the future.

Minor activities

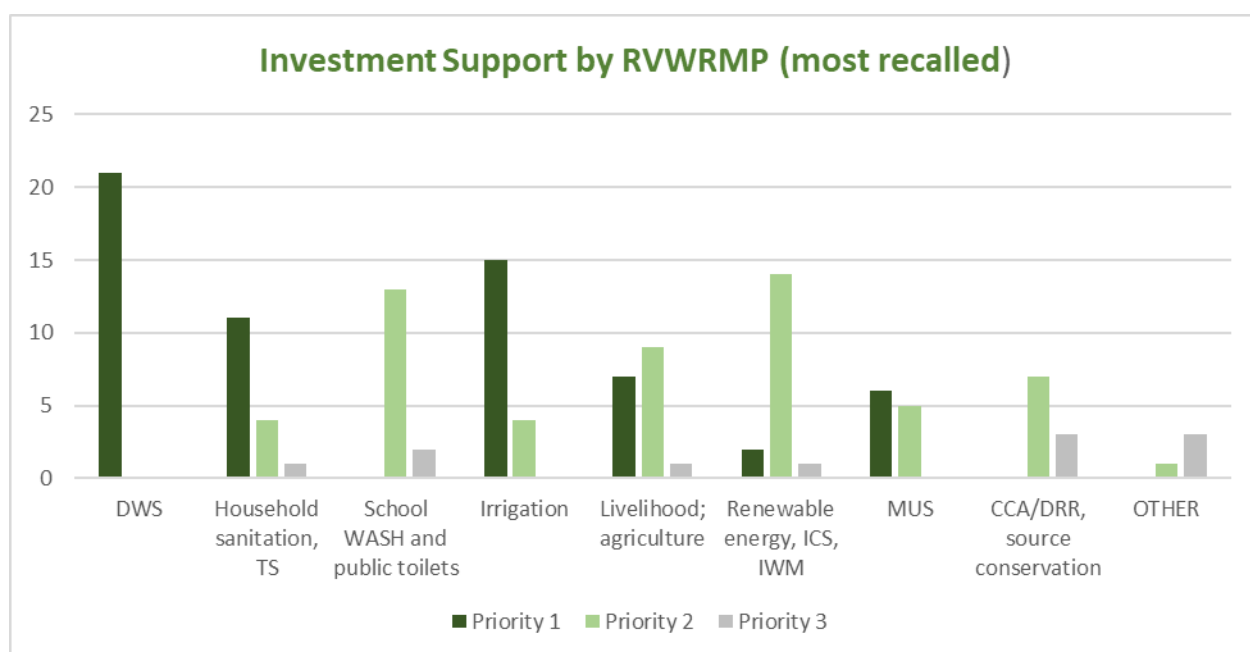
- Design software training to RM Engineers/Sub-Engineers (5-6d)
- ToT on WASH Supply Chain to SHPs (3d)
- Orientation on WASH and Livelihoods to FCs and GWROs (3d)
- Water Quality Test Training to WQ Focal person of RMs (3d, review 2d)
- HRBA/GESI Training to RM Officials (3d)
- Review and Planning Workshop on WASH Management (1d)
- Scheme Sustainability Workshop (3d)
- Public Finance Management and SuTRA Refresher Training to RM Account Chief (2d)

4. Experiences and lessons learned

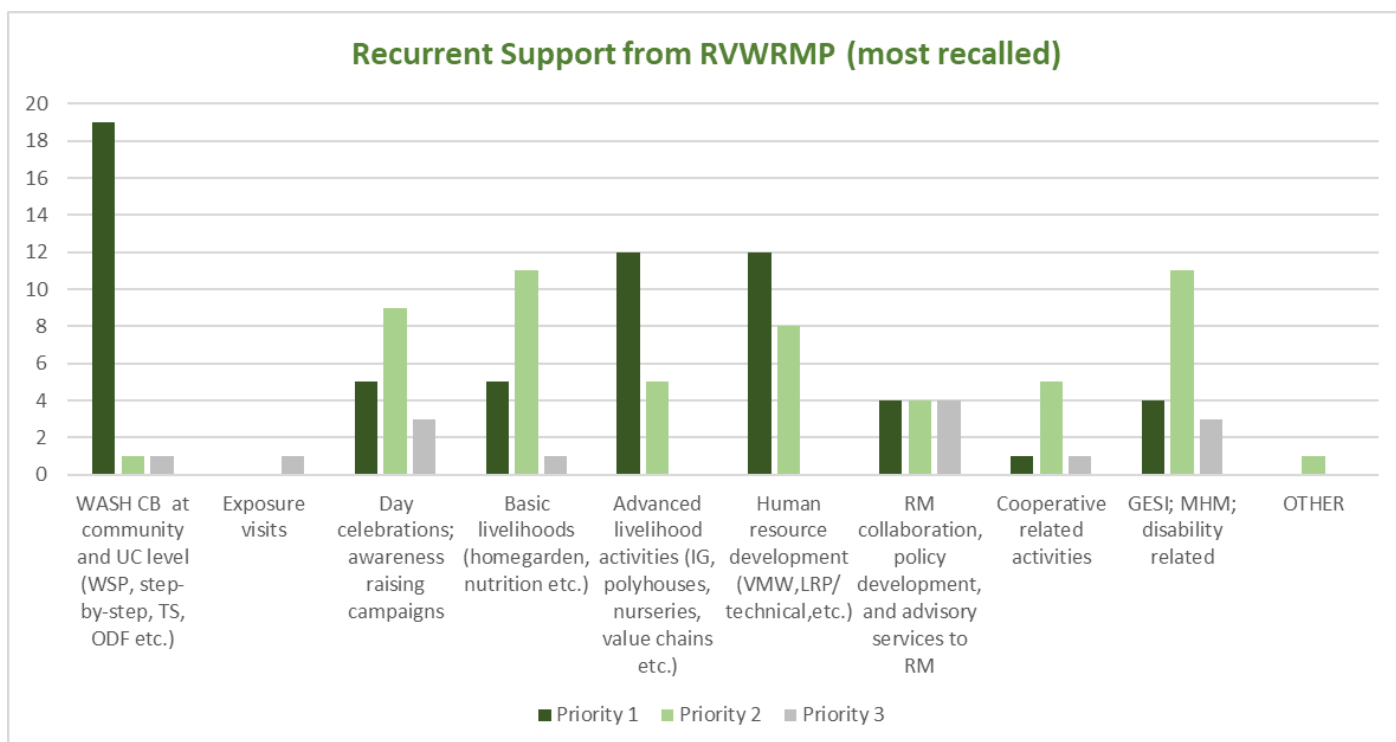
4.1 RM representative experiences on cooperation with RVWRMP

We asked the following 20 questions from 21 RMs representatives who were available, involving typically the Chair, Vice Chair, several ward chairs, and some sector chiefs and officers. The responses are summarized one by one below.

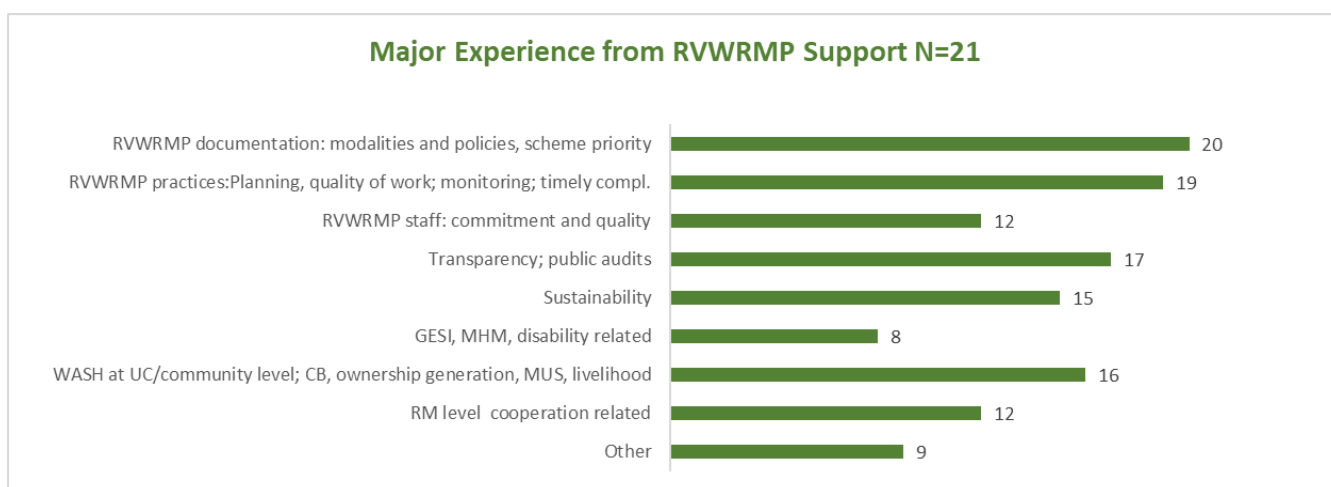
Q1: Which Investment activities come to your mind that have been implemented with support from RVWRMP? ‘Priority 1’ refers to 3 first mentioned activities, ‘priority 2’ refers to three secondly mentioned activities, and ‘priority 3’ refers to the rest of the mentioned activities. The findings indicate that water supply, sanitation and irrigation were the first activities that came to RM representatives’ mind, followed by school WASH, rural livelihoods, renewable energy and MUS. CCA/DRR were also mentioned as secondary or tertiary priority. The responses typically emphasized WASH and water uses reflecting the project’s strong focus and long-term work on these subjects.



Q2: Which recurrent activities come to your mind that have been implemented with support from RVWRMP? The RM representatives most frequently recalled community/UC level capacity building on WASH, advanced livelihood activities, and human resource development through trainings. They also recalled the basic livelihood activities including home gardens, activities regarding MHM and disadvantaged groups, as well as awareness raising campaigns and day celebrations. The responses emphasized well the core activities of the project, especially the support for the UCs and livelihood groups, as well as other delivered trainings and GESI activities.



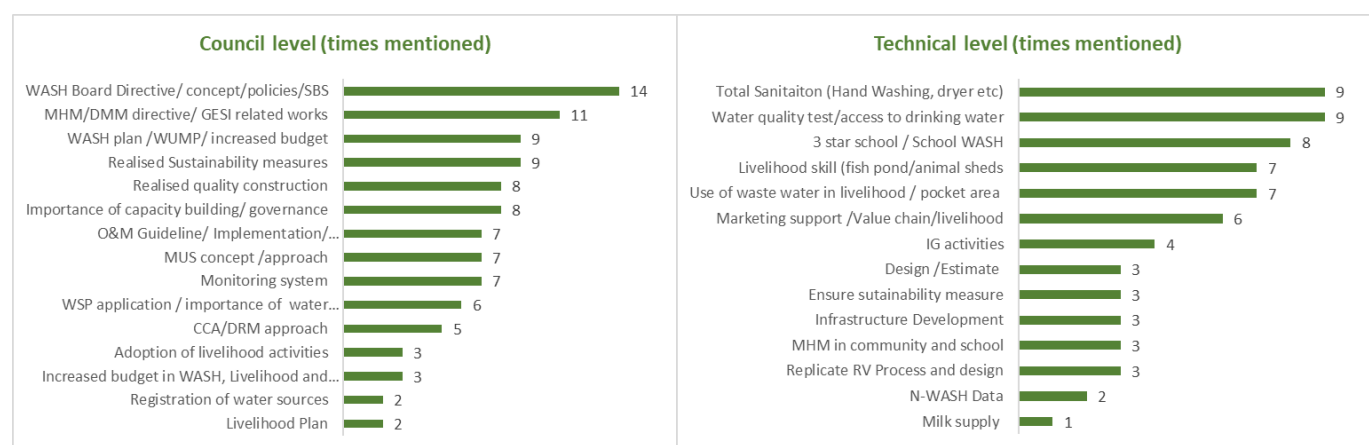
Q3: What are the major learnings and experiences from RVWRMP support? The RM representatives mostly referred to the policies and modalities of the project, as well as the good quality of the actual implementation. These reflect the two sides of the implementation: planning and ways of working on paper, as well as the actual implementation reality, both being embraced by the representatives. The second most mentioned aspects considered further the excellent quality of work, sustainability, and the principles of transparency (public audits), ownership, and commitment.



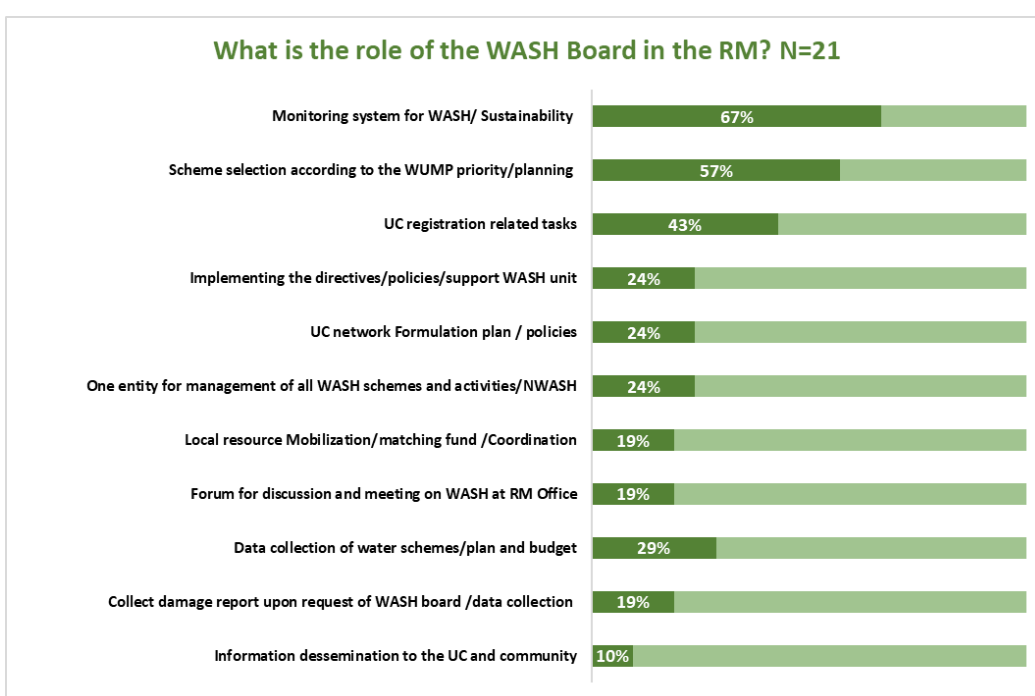
Q4: What are the changes from the start of project cooperation with the RM until now? The RM representatives answered that at the council level, the biggest changes regarded WASH policies and modalities, MHM/DMM/GESI policies and directives, WASH planning (WUMP), and sustainability. The other topics raised gave high priority to WASH sector planning and implementation quality and modalities.

This reflects the focus of the project on the WASH sector. Interestingly, livelihoods were mentioned very seldom if at all in this question.

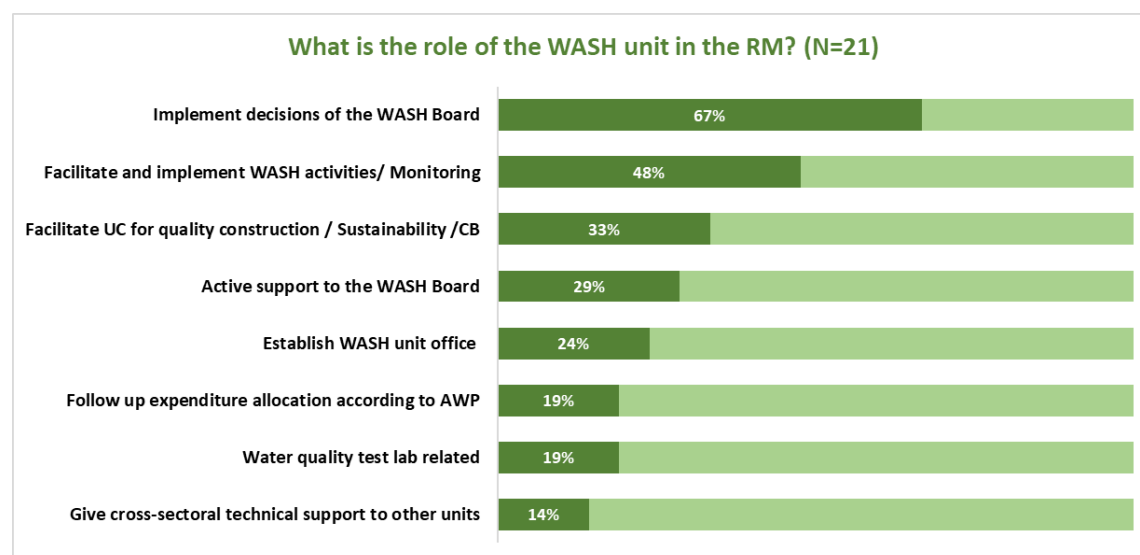
At the technical level, the biggest changes regarded access to water supply, sanitation, and school WASH. Again, this finding reflects the strong standing, long-term work, and implementation capacity of the project in WASH sector. The WASH related changes were followed by a set of livelihoods related changes, involving livelihoods skills and marketing support, reflecting that the livelihoods related technical interventions based on the water supply were important for the informants.



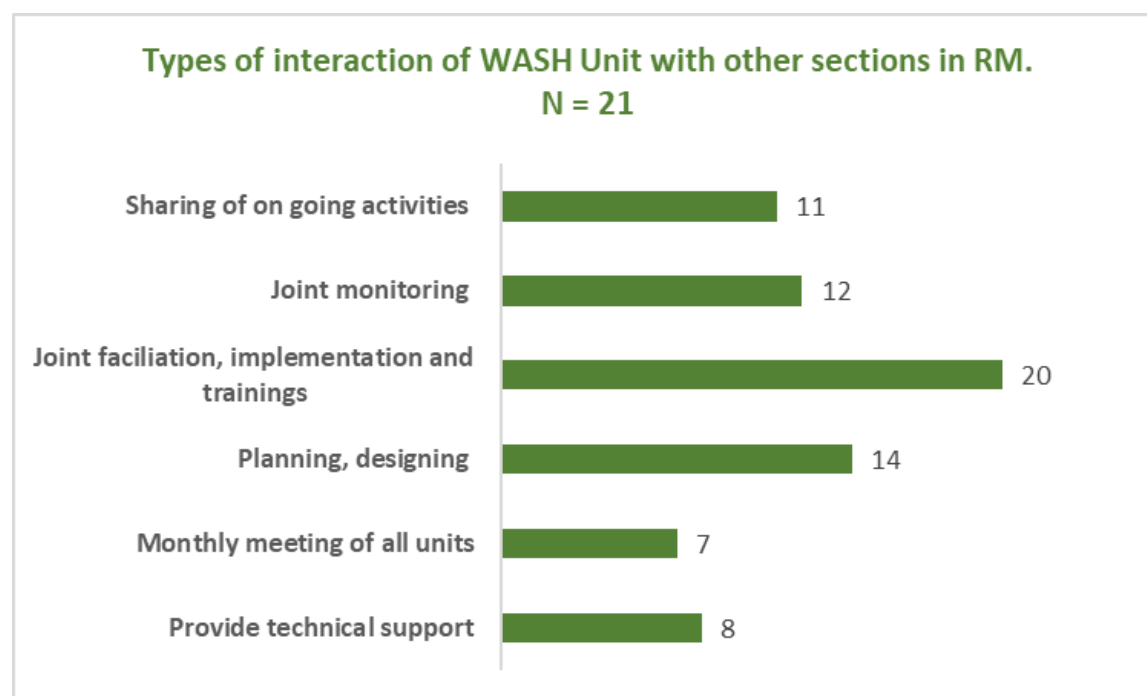
Q5: What is the role of the WASH Board in the RM? The RM representatives found the most important aspects were setting up a monitoring system for the schemes, WASH planning and scheme priority selection, and UC registration and related tasks. These can be considered very important functions, reflecting that the RM representation is well informed about the subject and aware of the necessary tasks. The following mentioned aspects were in line with the idea of the WASH Board in the RMs.



Q6: What is the role of the WASH Unit in the RM? This question followed the same question on the WASH Board. The RM representatives answered rightfully that the role of the unit is to implement the decisions of the WASH Board, and more generally to implement and monitor WASH activities. The responses convey that the informants understand the roles and responsibilities of the WASH Board and Unit.

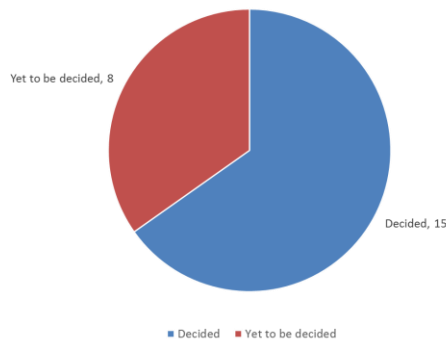


Q7: How does the WASH unit interact with other sections of the RM? Typical types of interaction of WASH Unit with other RM sections were joint facilitation and implementation of trainings, planning and designing, monitoring and shared activities, technical support and monthly meetings of all RM units.

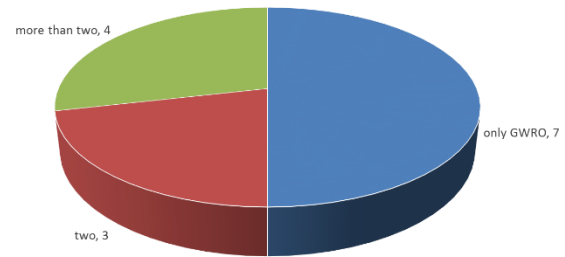


Q8: In your opinion, how will the WASH Unit be continued in the RM? This question was asked in a separate brief survey with the RMs in March 2022, having 23 answers while 4 could not respond to the question at the time. The responses were as follows:

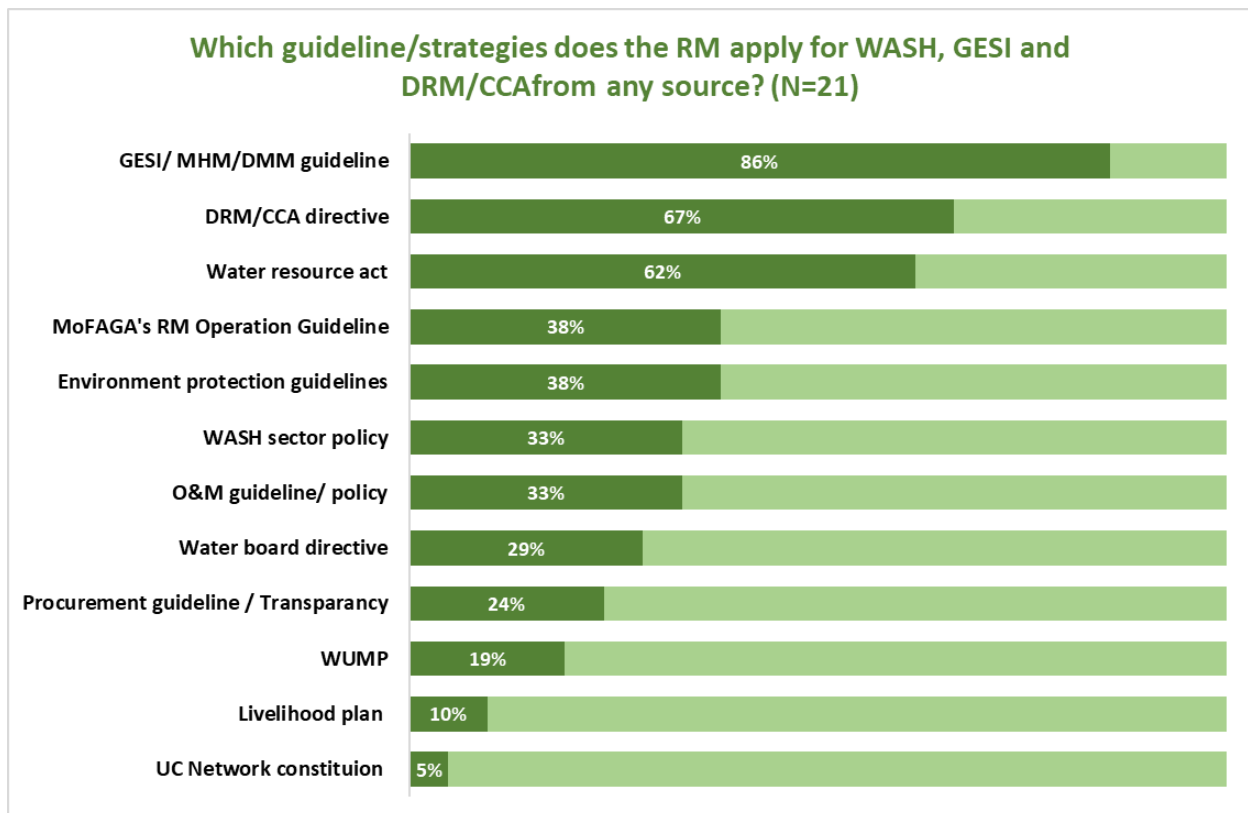
Decision on Continuation of WASH Unit by RMs



Staff in WASH Unit Next Year

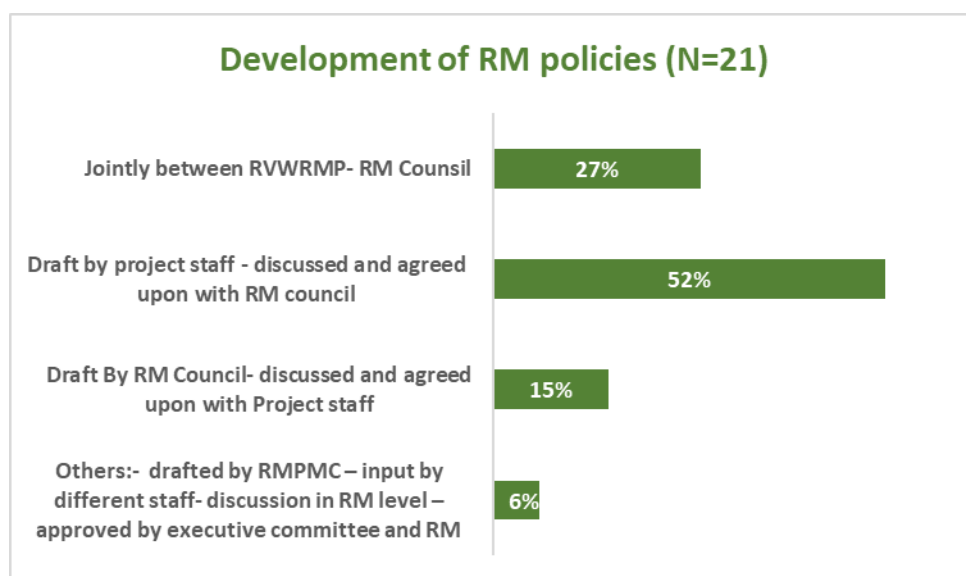


Q9: Which guidelines or strategies does the RM apply for WASH, GESI, and CCA-DRM? This question reflected what policies and guidelines the RMs remember best. Almost all RMs responded that they have GESI guidelines, and most of them also have CCA-DRM directives, and that they apply the Water Resources Act. Other guidelines and policies were more seldomly mentioned, including the WUMP. A WUMP has been prepared in all the interviewed RMs but was completed some four years ago, which may explain why it was seldom mentioned in this survey.

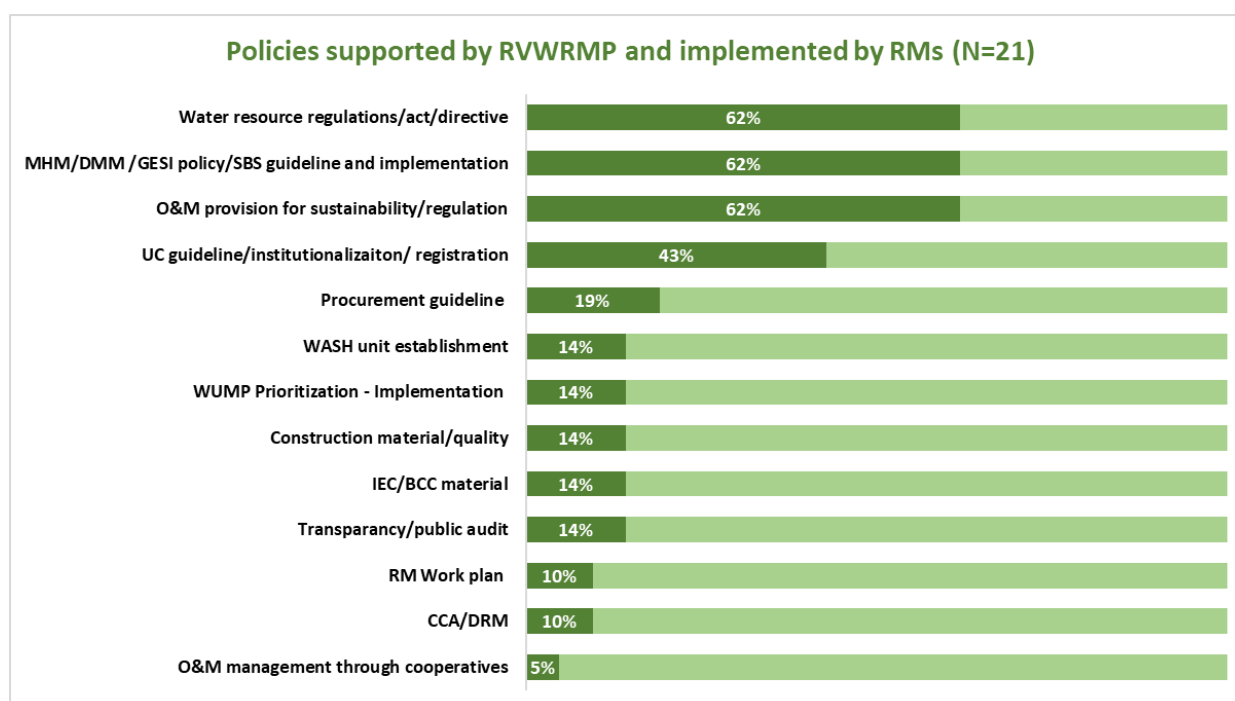


Q10: How have the RM Policies (related to RVWRMP) been developed? The RM responded that policies were initiated and drafted by the project and subsequently discussed and agreed upon by the RM council in more than 50% of the cases. In 27% of the cases, the policies were developed jointly between the RM

council and the project and only 15% were drafted by the RM council and then discussed with the project before approval by the RM Council. However, all the types of modalities have been applied within the same RM presumably depending on the policy at hand.



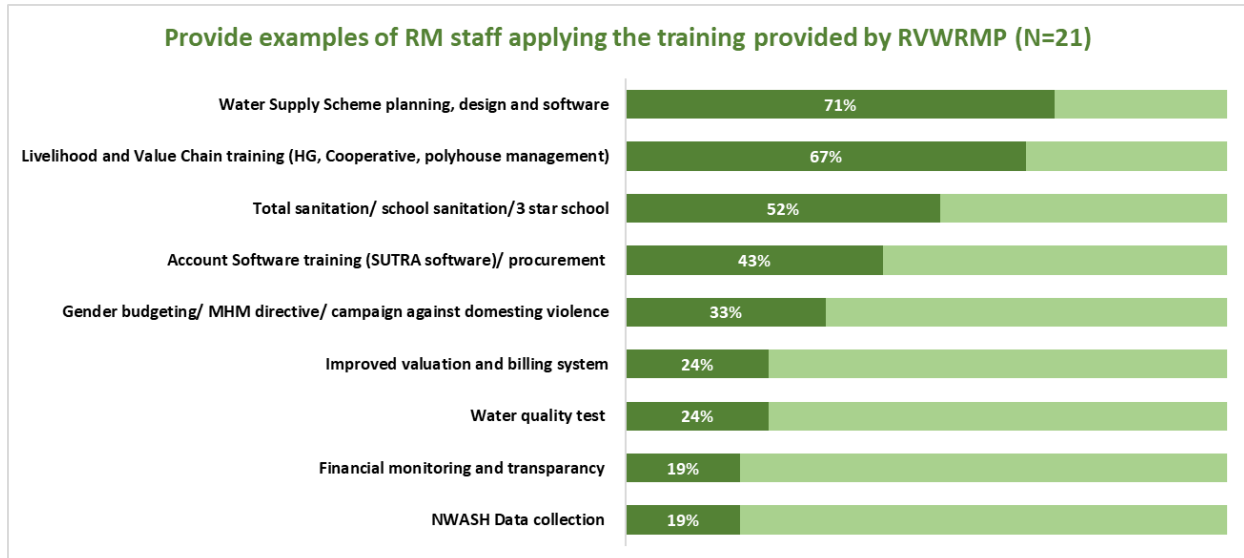
Q11: Are you implementing any policies supported by RVWRMP? RMs mentioned they are implementing the following policies and guidelines of RVWRMP:



The % reflects how many times the policy and guideline were mentioned by the RMs. In other words what first springs to mind or what is used most frequently by the RM. Not surprisingly the policies concerning WASH are at the forefront, but it is interesting that the policies for MHM/DMM/GESI are at equal level.

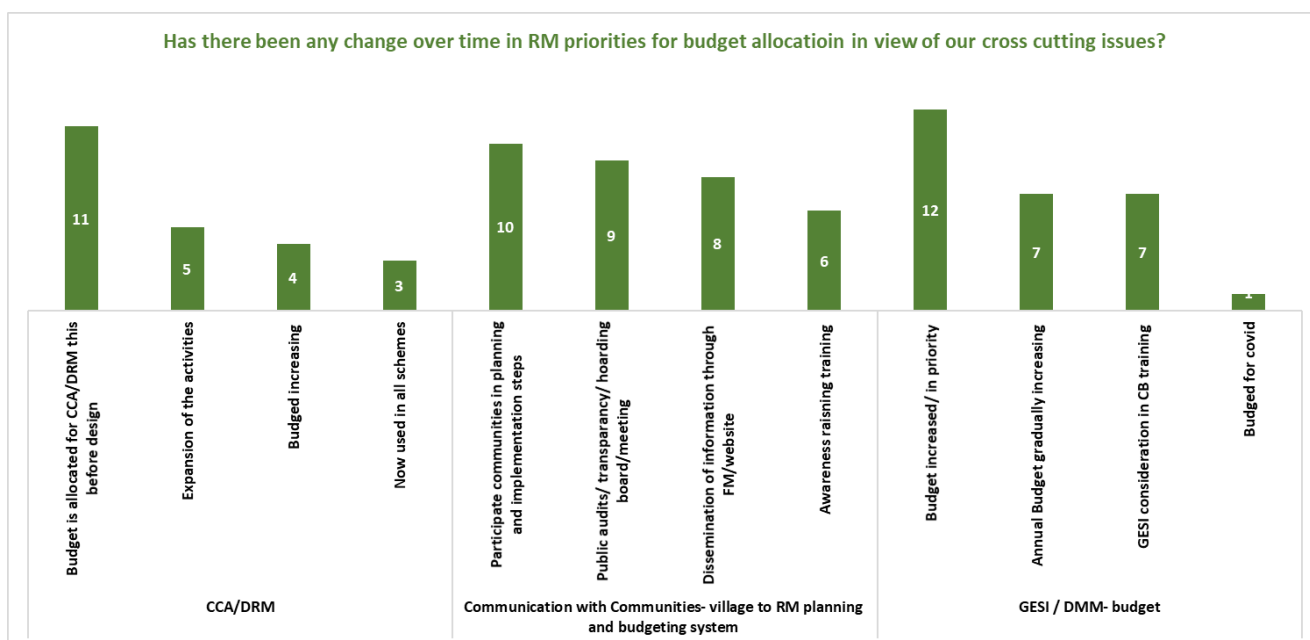
Concerning the guidelines, the Step-by-Step (SBS) guideline for project planning and implementation has proven to be a very useful tool for the RMs.

Q12: Provide examples of RM staff applying trainings provided by RVWRMP. The interviewed RMs responded as follows:

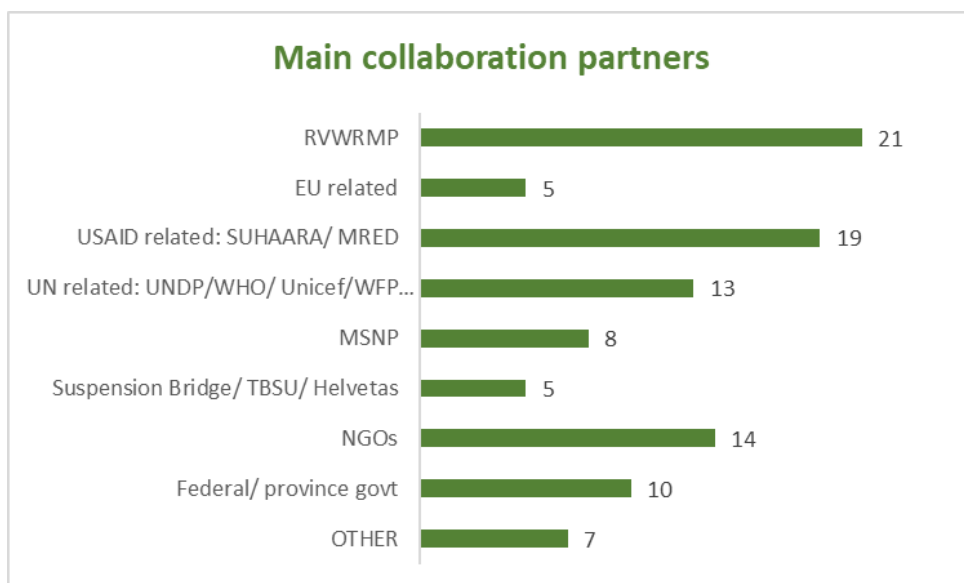


The % reflects how many times the application of training courses were mentioned by the RMs. At the same times it shows that the training provided by the project correspond to the needs of staff in their daily work, thus being applied.

Q13: Has there been a change over time in RM priorities for budget allocation in view of our cross-cutting issues? Regarding changes in CCA-DRM, there is improvement in budget and its allocation, expansion of activities, and accounting for CCA-DRM in all schemes. Regarding community level planning, there is improvement in participation, transparency (public audits and meetings), information sharing, and awareness. Regarding changes in GESI and DMM, there is improvement in gender budgeting and its allocation, as well as consideration of GESI in activities.

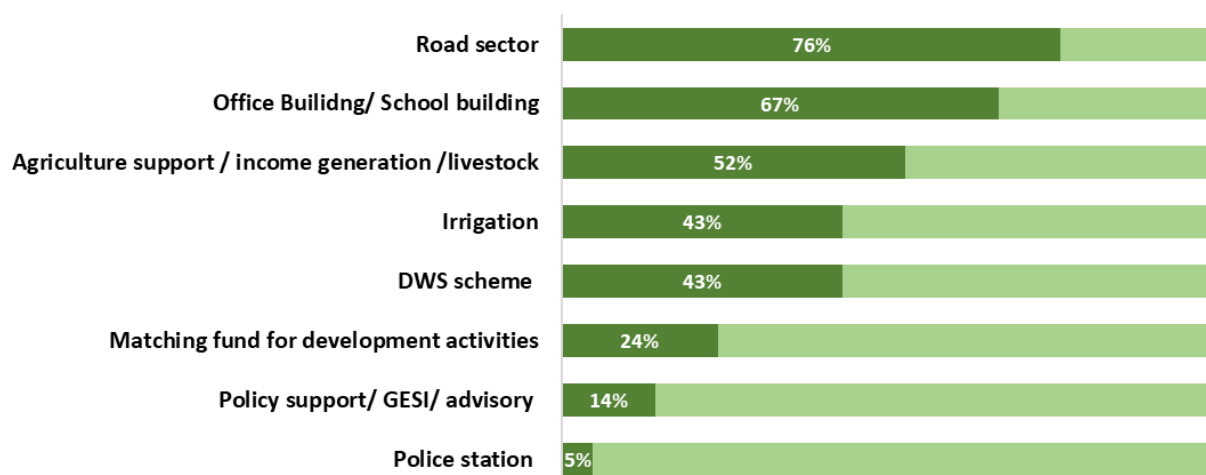


Q14: Who have been your main cooperation and collaboration partners in the RM? The mentioned partners are listed below. RVWRMP was mentioned by all interviewed RMs, followed by USAID related partners and NGOs. Interestingly, the Federal and Province governments were seldom mentioned.



Q15: Where are the areas and activities of collaboration with provincial government? Most RMs collaborate in the road sector, followed by construction of buildings, livelihoods cooperation, and water infrastructure related collaboration (irrigation or Drinking Water Supply (DWS)).

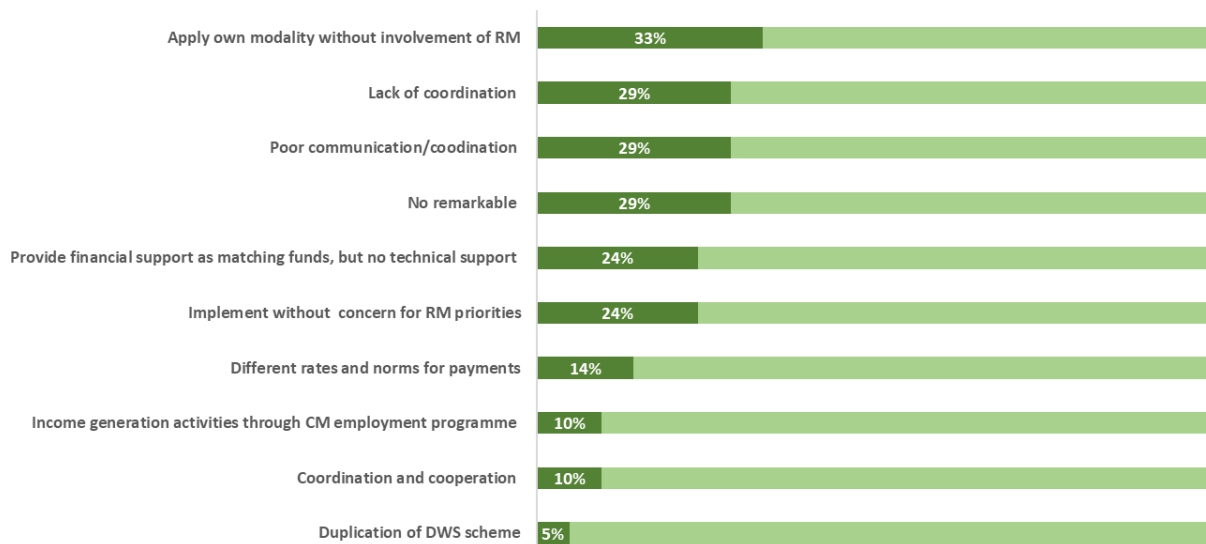
What are the areas and activities of collaboration with provincial government? (N=21)



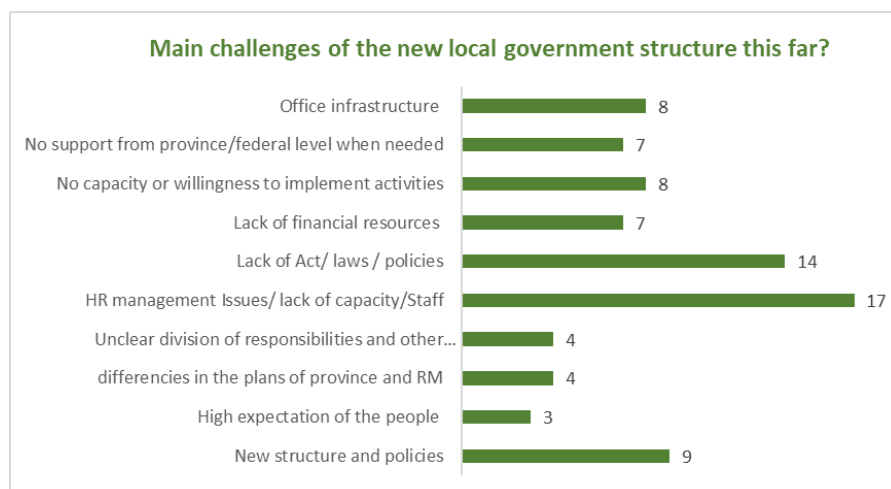
Q16: What are the experiences of collaboration of the RM with the provincial governments?

Experiences with the Provinces (Sudurpaschim and Karnali) are mainly alarmingly negative: The respondents reported that the provinces do not involve the RM in the activities they implement in the municipality (7), there is a lack of coordination (6), poor communication (6), there is no experience of cooperation at all (6), no technical support (5), implementing activities without considering RM priorities (5), and duplication of DWS schemes (1). On the positive side, income generation and employment related activities were mentioned twice, and coordination and cooperation also twice.

What are the experiences of collaboration/cooperation with provincial government? N=21



Q17: What has been your biggest challenges in the new structure and work as an RM? The biggest structural challenges in the RM thus far are considered human resources and staffing (17) and the lack of acts, laws, and policies (14). The latter is interesting as it is the main job of the RM elected representatives to produce them. Lack of office infrastructure, lack of support from other levels of governance, lack of financial resources, as well as lack of capacity and willingness were also mentioned often. In other words, the RMs were established with mandates and responsibilities but they have had no guidance nor sufficient resources as to *how* to fulfil those practically. The other challenges are stated in the figure below:



Q18: Thinking back to your expectations before the elections of what could you achieve, how does this compare to the reality? The RM responses were quite similar, though some themes were mentioned more frequently than others. The responses mainly focused on the topics that the RM successfully had developed during their electoral period in view of what they promised in their election campaigns: Regarding successes they had achieved, road construction was mentioned 13 times; WASH development 12 times; RM offices, schools and health facility construction 11 times, livelihoods; agriculture and employment 8 times; health sector development 6 times; electrification 5 times; irrigation and IWMs 4 times, GESI issues 3 times, education sector development 3 times, literacy improvement 2 times, and human resources development once. Not all commitments have been fulfilled during the electoral period, despite this they all felt that they had achieved between 65-90% of their manifests/targets. Overall, they were satisfied with their status and the assistance they had received from the project to achieve this.

Q19: What do you need to fulfil your roles and responsibilities now? The respondents noted that the lack of capable human resources, financial resources, and modalities such as policies and procedures are the main hindrances to fulfilling their responsibilities, closely followed by lack of technical skills and lack of collaboration with the other government levels.



Q20: If RVWRMP was starting today, what should be the focus of the support to your RM? Depending on how the RMs interpreted the question, they either emphasized all current result areas and main project activities, or they extended the scope of their response outside the project. As many RMs have achieved very good coverage of DWS the focus should be on establishment of private taps, maintenance of the systems, and securing the sustainability of the systems through CCA/DRM. They did not emphasise water supply as such but more on the topics of irrigation and livelihoods; more focus on income generation activities through the use and development of available agricultural and livestock resources.

4.2 Quotes from RM Chairs and Vice Chairs



"One of the key successes of RVWRMP support is sanitation and hygiene. It includes personal, school and community hygiene. Sanitation and hygiene promoters are providing training to the community and carrying out door to door monitoring of the behavior changes. We have constructed school WASH facilities with Child-Gender-Disability friendly structures, with sanitary pad changing and disposal provision. Total Sanitation indicators are developed for community sanitation".

Akkal Bahadur Dhami, Chairperson, Chhabis Pathibhera RM, Bajhang

"Sustainability of water supply schemes is taken into consideration in RVWRMP supported schemes, which was not considered by other agencies before. The entire working modality of the Project is replicable, and the RM will gradually replicate the best practices. All the schemes are supported based on the WUMP priority, but out of 38 prioritized schemes, only eight schemes are completed so far. As WASH is still the RM's priority, we realized that RVWRMP's support should be continued in coming years too"

Bal Bahadur Guruna, Chairperson, Aalital RM, Dadeldhura

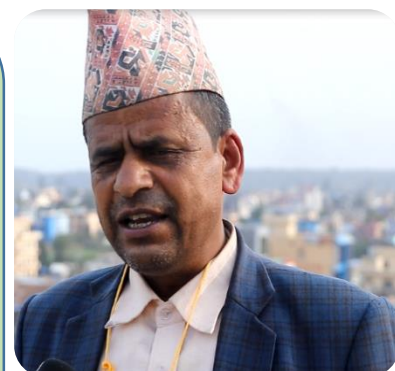


"Considering the global issue of sustainability of WSS schemes, our RM formulated policy to implement water supply schemes with metered yard connections. It has ensured sustainable operation and maintenance of the schemes. Wastewater is used for home gardens. Our RM has learnt from RVWRMP the scheme implementation Step-by-step process and replicated the zero corruption and UC governance measures. The local community's living standard is changed through income generation and improved health status."

Dan Bahadur Thapa, Chairperson, Bhagawatimai RM, Dailekh

"We have scaled up income generation activities by establishing pocket areas for fruit, walnut, large cardamom and green vegetables to implement the RM's agriculture plan. For the vegetable pocket area, we introduced a minimum of 10 plastic tunnels per settlement in 10 different settlements. 'One house, 30 plants' campaign is being implemented jointly with the Project. Green vegetable collection centers are constructed. The local community has now started getting economic benefits from the Project's support."

Bhuvaneshwor Upadhyay, Chairperson, Thalara RM, Bajhang





"The most inspiring approach of the Project is the community procurement process, which ensures transparency and participation of all stakeholders. Quality of materials and construction is never compromised – rather, cost is saved through competitive selection of suppliers. Poor households have benefitted from irrigation and income generation activities. The range of income in Chure is NPR 40,000 to 300,000 per year per household. Community awareness is raised up by different trainings. It's painful to know that the Project is going to be phased out soon."

Dhan Bahadur Roka Maaar, Chairperson, Chure RM, Kailali

"Apihimal is the remotest RM of Darchula. There was no practice of eating green vegetables before, women used to eat *roti* with salt. After introducing the home garden concept, everybody started consuming green vegetables and it has improved women's health. Women are united through groups; skill are transferred and leadership is developed. A kind of social transformation is observed, which ultimately supports the Government's dream of "Happy Nepali - Prosperous Nepal". Entire step-by-step approach of the Project is replicable to the RM. I would like to thank RVWRMP"

Dharmananda Singh Manyal, RM Chairperson, Apihimal RM, Darchula



"Women have to do lot of work at household level. We don't have fertile land, so most people don't have enough food from their own production for more than 3 months in a year. Lots of changes are observed from RVWRMP's support. Time saved from fetching water is utilized in home gardens, and Ginger and Turmeric farming. Ginger and Turmeric are produced at commercial scale. Sanitary pad making at local level has changed the lives of women and girls. The Chhau-hut practice is being reduced gradually. We will be able to declare as a chhau-hut free RM in one year"

Indra Bohara, Vice Chairperson, Badikedar RM, Doti

"RVWRMP's community procurement process ensures transparency and zero corruption. Transparency is the most important aspect of development. The model should be applied by all the development agencies including federal, provincial and local governments. RVWRMP has provided support to the RM to implement its development policy in infrastructure development, economic uplifting and social transformation, through awareness campaigns and different capacity building activities".

Jaman Singh Dhami, RM Chairperson, Marma RM, Darchula





"There are lot of development needs in the village and we alone are not able to solve all of them. We received good support from RVWRMP to invest a huge amount in water supply schemes. The Project's support in livelihoods, sanitation and other components has exceeded my expectations. One of the key changes in the village is that girls don't miss school during days of menstruation. Menstrual management and behavior change is a slow process. We have started from the schoolgirls. We have installed sanitary pad vending machines in three schools that encourage girls to attend school all the time".

Kaushila Kumari Bhatta, RM Chairperson, Bhageshwor RM, Dadeladhura

"RVWRMP simplified and defined menstruation as 'dignified'. Menstruation was regarded as sin but now it became a holy movement. All RM representatives, women and girls are happily participating in the movement. Sanitary pad making, awareness campaigns and Women as Decision Maker workshops have created a lot of changes in the villages. We are implementing the "Now I speak" movement with adolescent girls, and it is effective. We realized that simplification of the problem is a way to find its solution."

Jhankar Bahadur Saud, RM Chairperson, Ramaroshan RM, Achham



"RVWRMP's working modality and approaches best fit at community level. In my opinion, it is an appropriate model for community development. With the Project's support, we already applied an Operation and Maintenance policy and Dignified Menstruation Management directives. Approaches of participation, transparency and cost sharing model are applied in all types of schemes in the RM. Most of the youths of Gaumul RM used to work as porters in other RMs but they are now self-employed in their own village. The cooperatives development model is very effective and has changed people's living standard".

Hari Bahadur Rokava. Chairperson. Gaumul RM. Baihana

"After federalization, the province and federal level activities are not coordinated with the RMs, but RVWRMP's beauty is that it works under the RM. The identity of the villages in Humla before was "shit is smelled when reaching villages". Now the identity is changed, as all households and schools are using toilets. It has stopped diarrhea and cholera epidemics, which were a key factor for child mortality. RVWRMP's drinking water, improved water mills, improved cooking stoves and home garden components are very effective in Humla."

Karna Bahadur Rawal, Chairperson, Kharpunath RM, Humla





"The Step-by-Step process of scheme implementation ensures participation of all beneficiaries in key scheme cycles including Users' Committee formation, public audit, scheme level monitoring and community procurement processes. Proper participation of the beneficiaries ensures transparency. Mandatory participation and representation of women and disadvantaged groups makes them empowered. I regard the approach of RVWRMP as excellent and commit to replicate it in the RMs in other development programs as well".
Karna Singh Saud, RM Chairperson, Shivnath RM, Baitadi

"After declaring the area open defecation free with RVWRMP's support, a lot of diseases in the village are controlled. The Project has done number of good works in the RM. Awareness is created through workshops and trainings. Explaining all cost by components to the community before, during and after construction of the scheme is very impressive. It solves most of the potential problems and ensures transparency. We expect more support from the Project in different sector in coming days as well.

Krishna Bahadur Rokaya, RM Chairperson, Sarkegad RM, Humla



"Namkha is the most remote RM and borders with China, most of the parts of the RM remain covered with snow for 4-6 months each year. In such a difficult place, the project solved drinking water problems and schemes are completed on time with good quality. We are very happy that RVWRMP supported drinking water, irrigation, improved water mills and improved cooking stoves in the remotest villages of the RM, like Limi and Yari, where none of the other agencies worked before. I expect the Project will continue in future as well".

Pema Tamang Lama, Vice Chairperson, Namkha RM, Humla

"RVWRMP started in our area in 2008, and we found it to be the best project. Through community participation, it has taught people to work together and has increased community cohesiveness. The transparency approach is excellent, and public audit is very effective. The project has supported us in water supply, cooperatives development, improved cooking stoves and sanitation components. People of the RM hope that it won't be phased out. I thank Finland's government for its support to a poor and remote community."

Prem Bahadur Budha, RM Chairperson, Bhairabi RM, Dailekh





"Apart from water and sanitation, the livelihood program has remarkably helped poor communities to enhance their income level. We have developed a green vegetable pocket corridor in Dallek, Sundmund and Bashar settlements. Farmers started to supply green vegetables to the district headquarters. We are aware that the Project is going to be phased out and ready to expand the activities with our own efforts to enhance agriculture, livestock and other sections of the RM".

Prem Singh Dhami, Chairperson, Naugad RM, Darchula

"We are jointly fighting against Chhaupadi malpractice and became able to declare the RM as chhau-hut free. We have destroyed chhau-huts physically, but still there are a lot of challenges to change behaviours. We are jointly organizing awareness programs to ensure that the huts will not be reconstructed. We will continue collaboration with the Project for training, awareness and capacity building to eradicate such taboos, with close involvement of formal and informal social leaders".

Pushpa Raj Sharma, Chairperson, Turmakhand RM, Achham



"Dilasaini is a remote RM of Baitadi. We are far from quality education and access to other facilities. RVWRMP provided great support for us in water, sanitation and livelihoods, together with capacity building. RVWRMP working approaches have supported us to change traditional ways of development. People are realizing the importance of community participation, transparency and collective decision-making processes as key aspects of sustainable development."

Ukendra Bohara, Chairperson, Dilasaini RM, Baitadi

"WUMP prioritisation ensured water access to Dalits and the poor. We don't have enough resources to construct schemes over a long distance, but it became possible through the Project's support. After improving availability of water at village level, marginalized people are also cultivating home gardens and changing hygiene behavior, which has enhanced their health and nutritional status. We have learnt sustainability aspects of water schemes such as O&M fund, water tariff, User Committee governance etc. The RM is planning to top up O&M funds for best performing UCs for their encouragement as a reward".

Tej Bahadur Dumrel, Chairperson, Sayal RM, Doti



"Out of many good approaches and working modalities of RVWRMP, I am personally very impressed with the transparent and participatory community procurement process. The process started already in the preparatory phase by forming procurement committees and training them in procurement processes and quality of materials. Collection of sealed quotations through public notice provides opportunities to all interested bidders. Opening of the bid is done publicly, with participation of User Committees, suppliers, RM and Project representatives. There is no chance of corruption, and we save money from this process. All development actors should replicate this beautiful process".

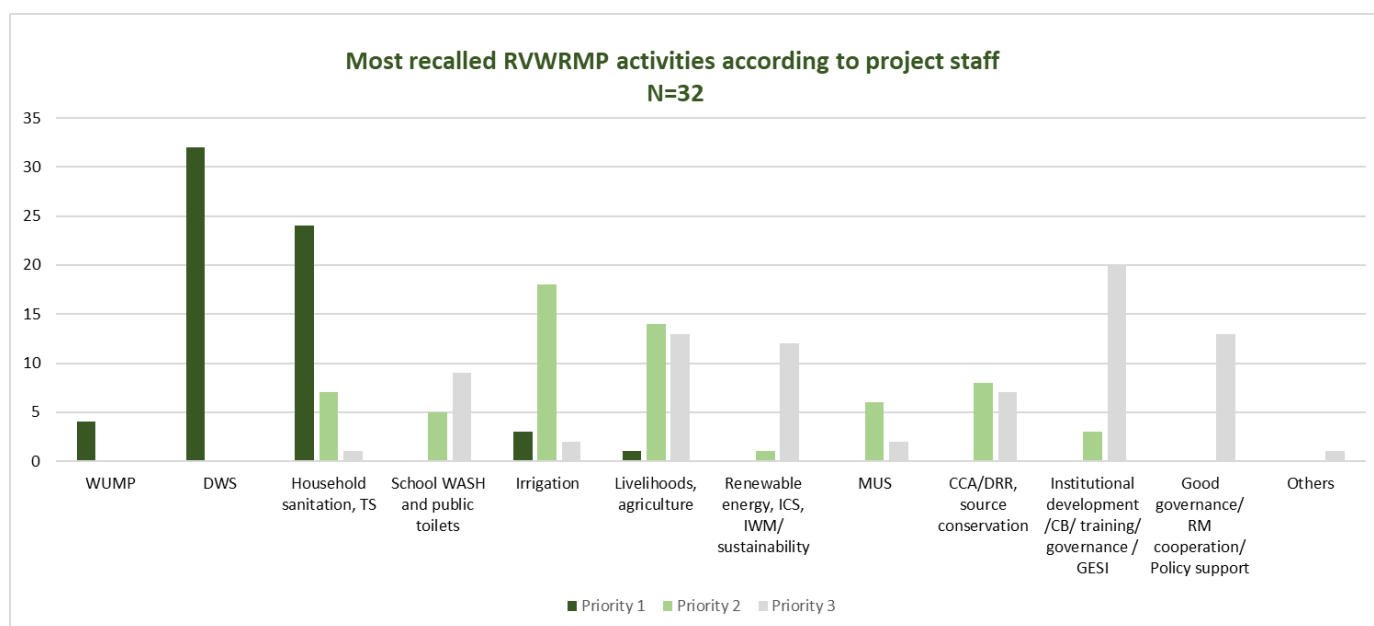
Umesh Prasad Bhatta, Chairperson, Ajaymeru RM, Dadeldhura

4.3 RVWRMP Staff experiences of cooperation with RMs

The staff questionnaire was forwarded to every project TSU office (WRA, WRE, TF and LO) as well as the WASH Units (GWRO, TF, LO) in each core municipality. The respective staff worked together to fill in one questionnaire from each unit. Thus, a total of 32 questionnaires have been received.

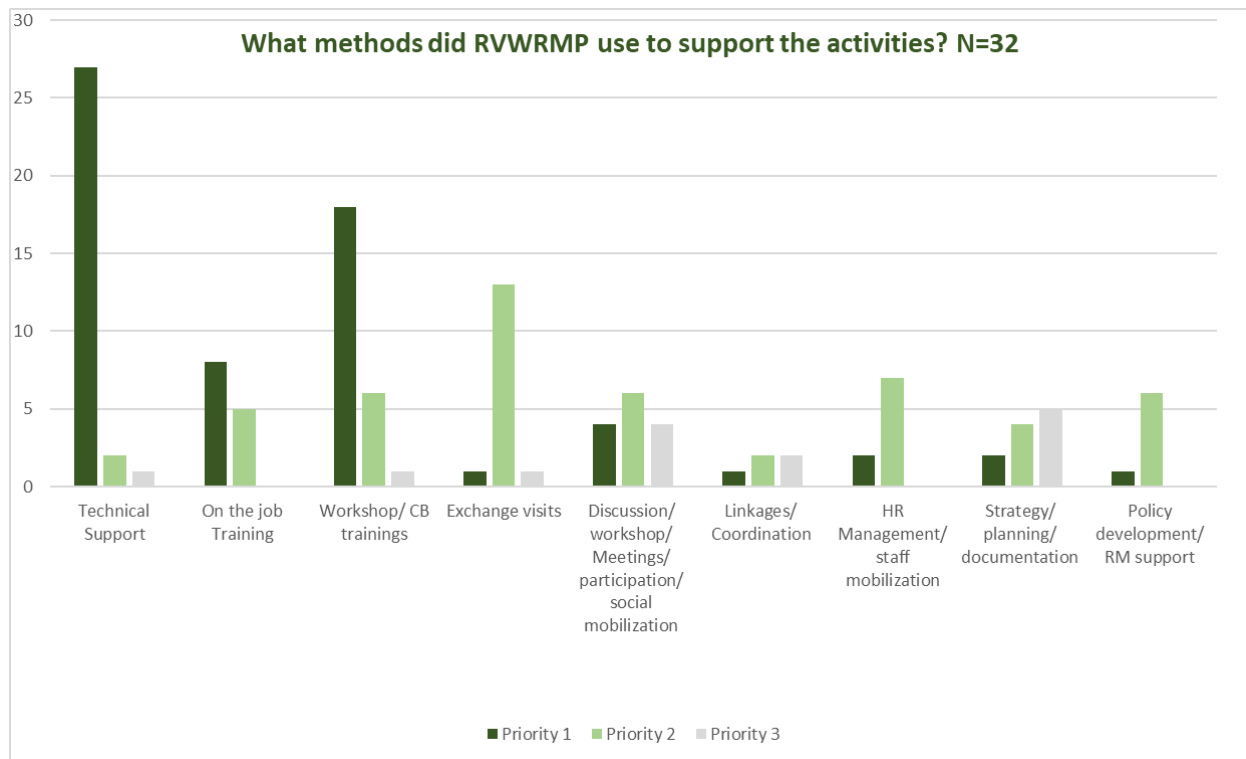
Q1: What activities has RVWRMP III undertaken with the RMs? List according to priorities (those activities receiving the most effort).

The results show that WASH activities, not surprisingly, were most emphasized by the staff, DWS and household TS topping the priority list, followed by irrigation and livelihoods. Interestingly, WUMPs were not often mentioned, probably because they were made many years ago and no new schemes have been started (selected as per the WUMP priority) in the final year. Overall, the responses reflect the mind set of project staff at the current time emphasising WASH in their work, as well as the fact that a majority of the staff are related to WASH, rather than livelihoods.

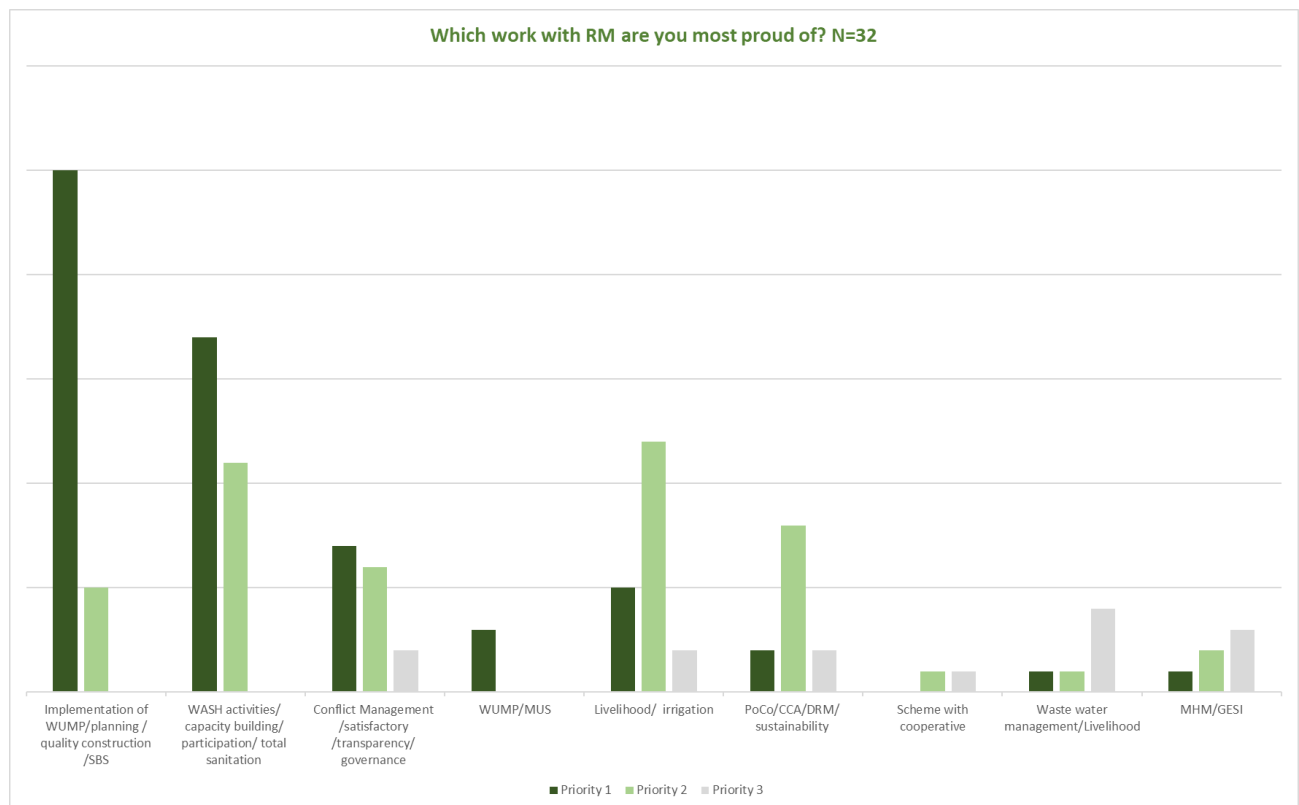


Q2: How did RVWRMP support the activities? eg. Technical Support? On-the-job Training? Workshops? Exchange visits? Discussion Meetings? Others?

The majority of staff finds that technical support has been the first priority in their works combined with on-the-job training and organised workshops and training courses. This followed by their role as facilitators in meetings, discussion and social mobilization. Generally speaking, this corresponds very well with the responses from the RMs concerning what they have appreciated most from the project.



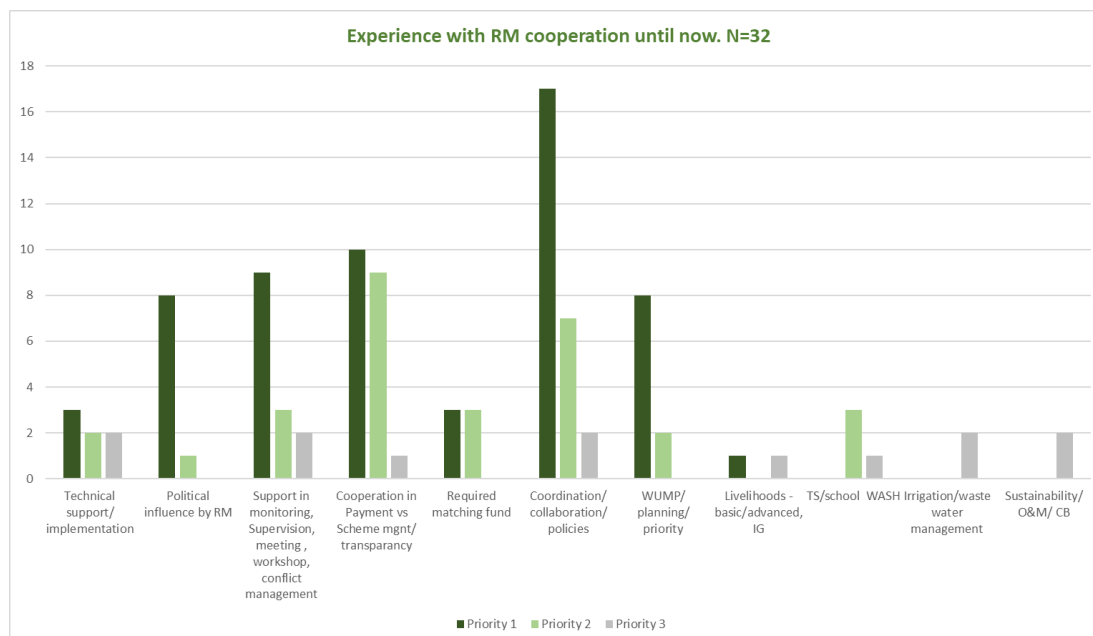
Q3: Which work with RMS are you most proud of? List the activities, starting with the best first.



Staff are most proud of the work process and the implementation of the WASH schemes. Secondly, the staff are proud of the inclusion of livelihood and income generation activities as result of the access to water as this has improved people's livelihoods and income. Q4 regarding things the staff would not do again was not understood and therefore an answer is not provided.

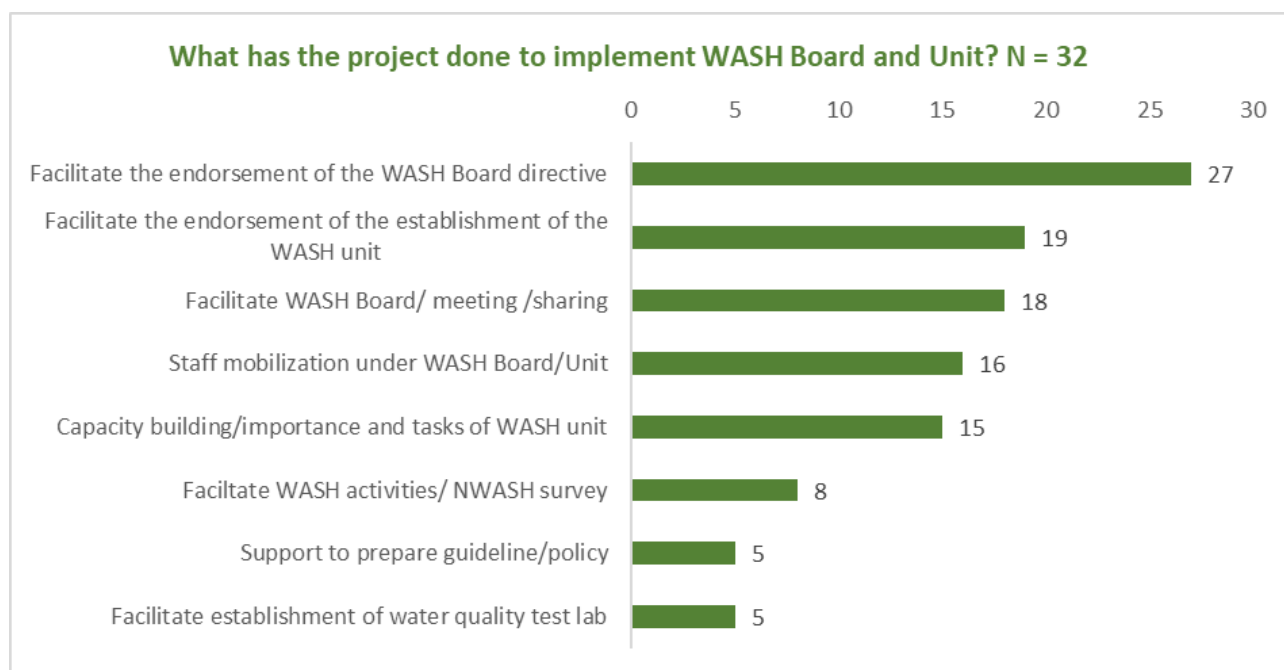
Q5: Experiences with RVWRMP RM cooperation from the start of working with the RMs until now?

This question was understood as what the staff had done together with the RM staff over the years. The staff mainly mentioned general cooperation and collaboration in several regards, such as policies and monitoring activities conducted together.



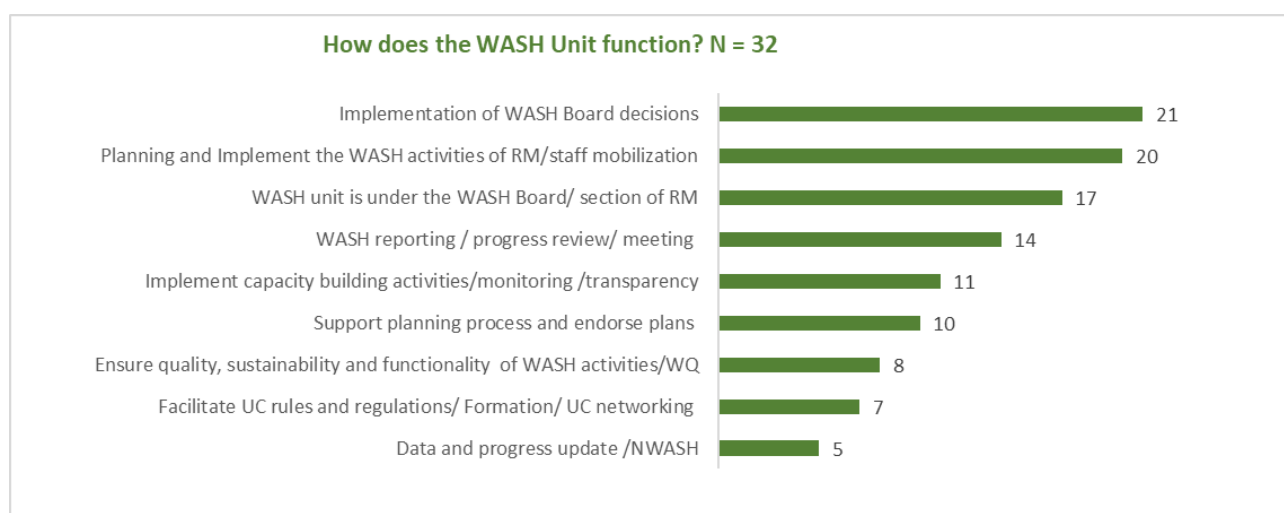
Q6: What has RVWRMP done to implement the WASH Board concept and establish the WASH Unit?

The responses reflect the fact that the concepts were introduced and promoted by the project to the RMs. The indirectly related concepts such as NWASH survey, policy development, and water quality lab establishment were also mentioned.



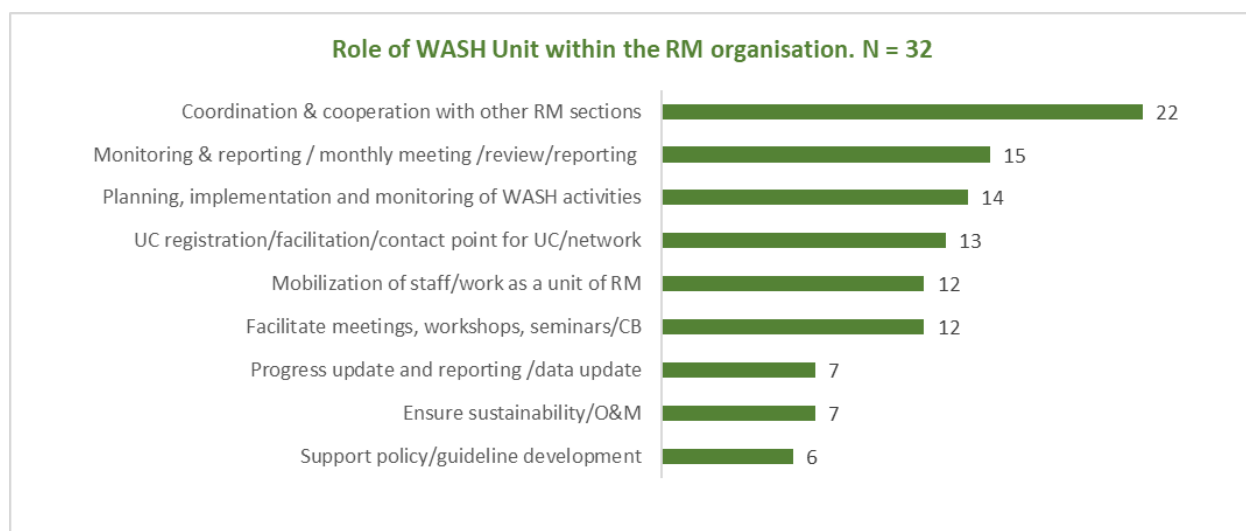
Q7: How does the WASH Unit function?

A large majority of staff mentioned the main function of WASH Units being the implementation of WASH Board decisions. Also planning, implementation of WASH, staff mobilization, reporting, and data updating were rightfully mentioned as the main tasks. Interestingly, some responses highlighted quality of work and the central purpose of work and values, as well, by mentioning ensuring sustainability and transparency as the functions. The responses are in line with the WASH Unit's responsibilities as per directive and guideline indicating that the staff are well aware of these tasks and assist the Unit in fulfilling them.



Q8: What is the role of the WASH Unit within the RMs' organisation?

Project staff mentioned coordination and cooperation most frequently, conveying they are well aware of the inter-sectoral nature of water and sanitation, being related to health, infrastructure development, education (school WASH), social development and agriculture. The staff otherwise mentioned concrete regular tasks of the unit, including monitoring, reporting, meetings, reviewing, UC registration, facilitation of activities, reporting and updates, as well as policy development support. This reflects that the staff are well aware of the concrete, regular tasks of the unit.

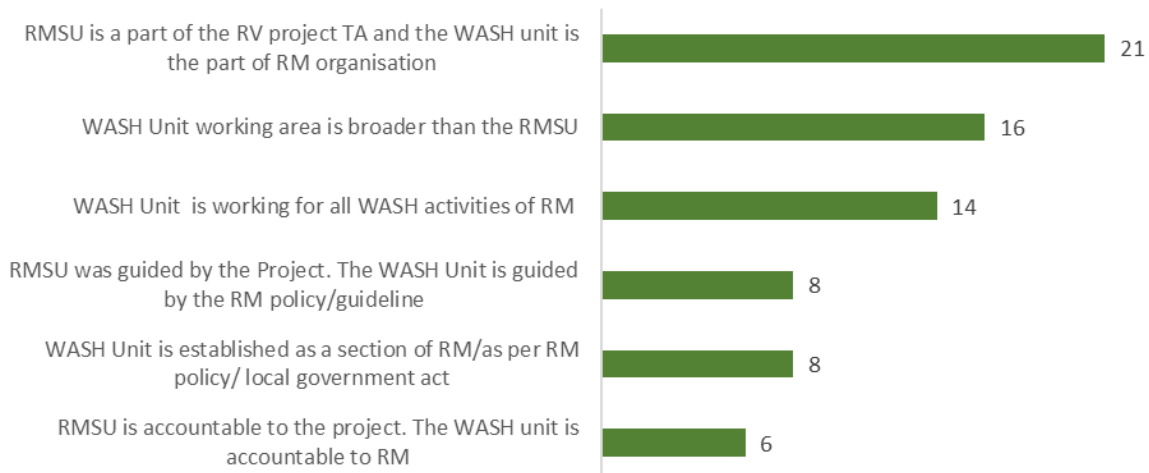


Q9: Any difference between the RMSU and WASH Unit responsibilities and mandates?

Staffers correctly pointed out that the RMSU was a part of the project structure and guided by project guidelines, whereas the WASH Unit is a part of the RM structure and guided by RM guidelines. WASH Unit is therefore responsible for all WASH actions in the whole area of the municipality, whereas the RMSU only took care of the project activities.

Overall, the responses clearly highlight that the staff have internalised the difference between the RMSU and WASH Unit, and understand the purpose of the shift from RMSU to WASH Unit. The responses reflect very well the idea behind the establishment of the units and the project's goal of ensuring that all activities are sustainable also after the project ends. This also conveys that the exit strategy of the project is successful in transferring responsibilities and developing capacity at RM level.

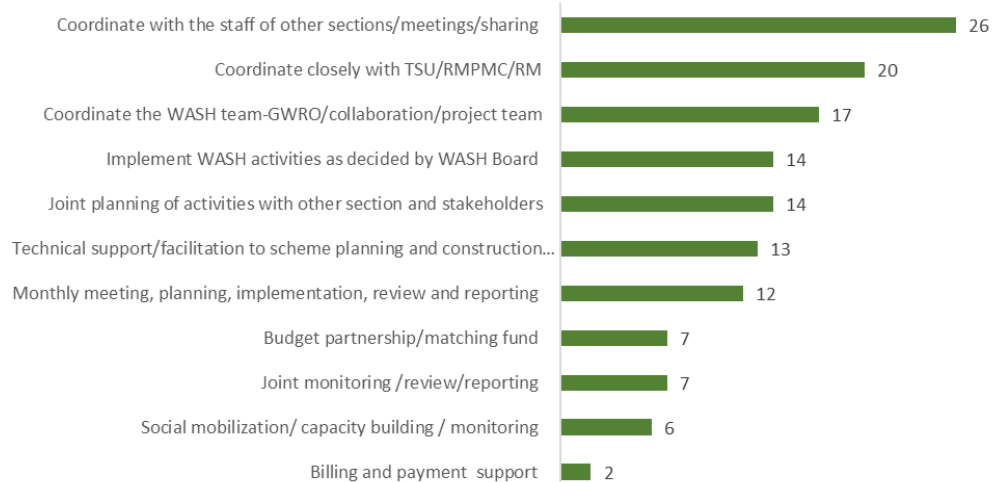
What are the differences between RMSU and WASH Unit responsibilities & mandates? N = 32



Q10: How do the WASH Unit staff work in the RM?

Again, the staff emphasised coordination between the sections and RM, implementing activities, planning, facilitation, implementation, reviewing and reporting works, in line with the previous answers.

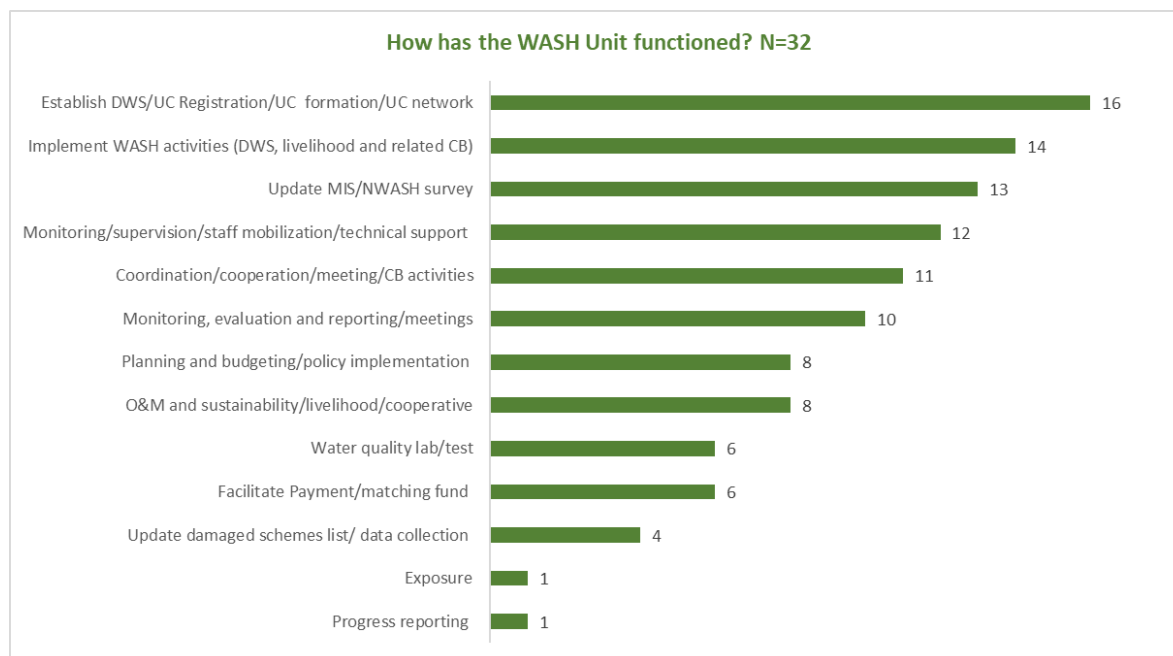
How do the WASH Unit staff work in RM? N = 32



Q11: What has the WASH unit worked on since being established?

This question focused more on the actions the unit has taken this far. The respondents emphasised most the practical implementation work including supervision of scheme construction related actions, and establishment of UCs. Updating NWAHS MIS was also mentioned (at the time ongoing activity), as well as more general tasks such as coordination, cooperation, monitoring, facilitation, policy implementation and data updates. These are all in line with the reality, the project having a relatively large implementation

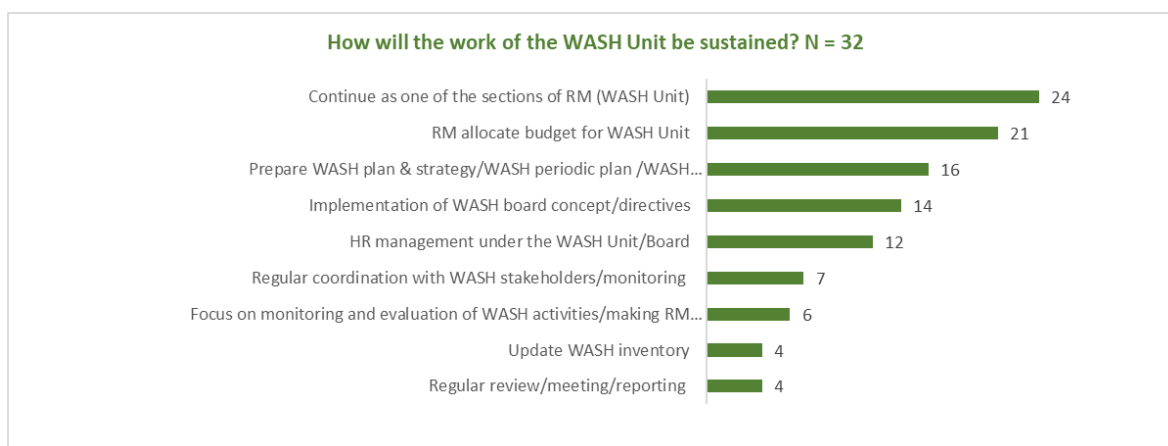
budget that enabled lots of supervision, technical assistance, and practical implementation works during the project period, along with the mentioned other tasks.



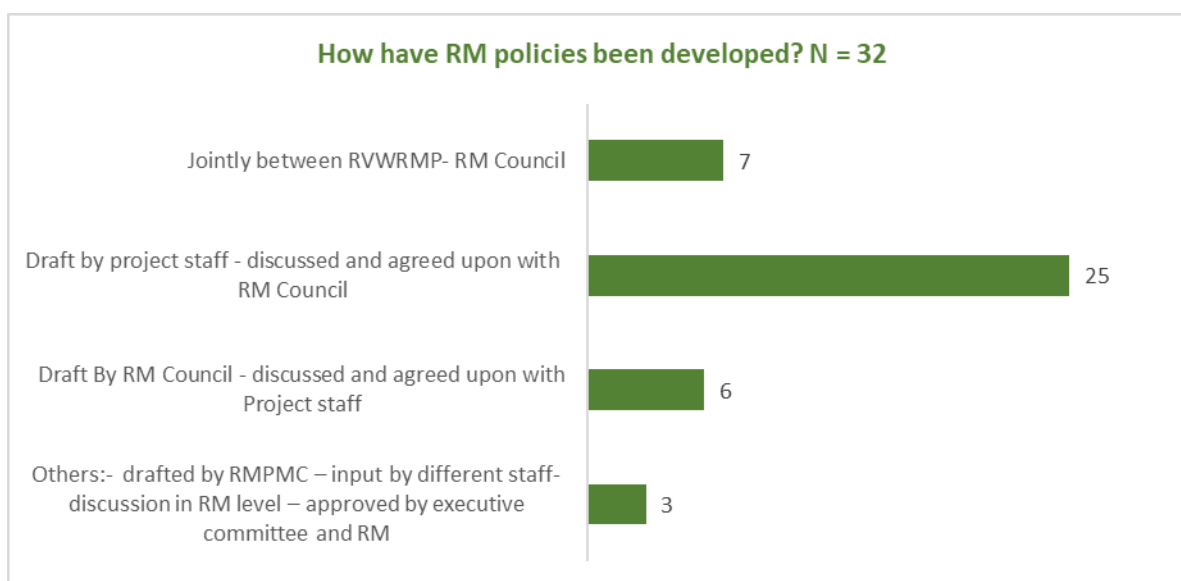
Q12: How will the WASH Unit be sustained?

All staff believe that the Unit will be sustained by the RMs, meaning that the RMs will have to include the staff in their assigned portfolio of staff within their recurrent budget. It should be noted that the Central Government has issued or decided that the RMs should have a certain number of staff within each administrative section and the recurrent budget transfer to the RMs are based on this. If the RMs need more staff, they would have to negotiate with the Central Government or try to raise additional funds locally through taxes.

While the responses are principally in line with the RM responses about the continuation of the WASH Board and Unit, only 15 RM respondents were certain of the continuation of these units, meaning that is has been decided in the RM. The approaching local elections may have influenced the RM responses as only the new governments can decide on the continuation after the elections. The impression among project staff indicates a positive attitude towards the idea of continuation being common in the RMs among all relevant parties.



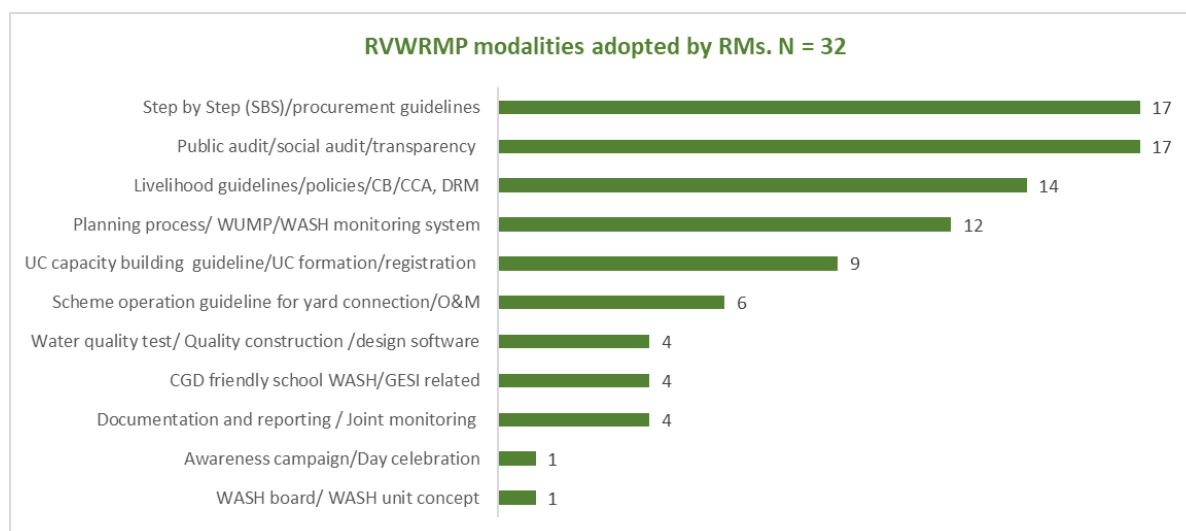
Q13: How have RM policies been developed?



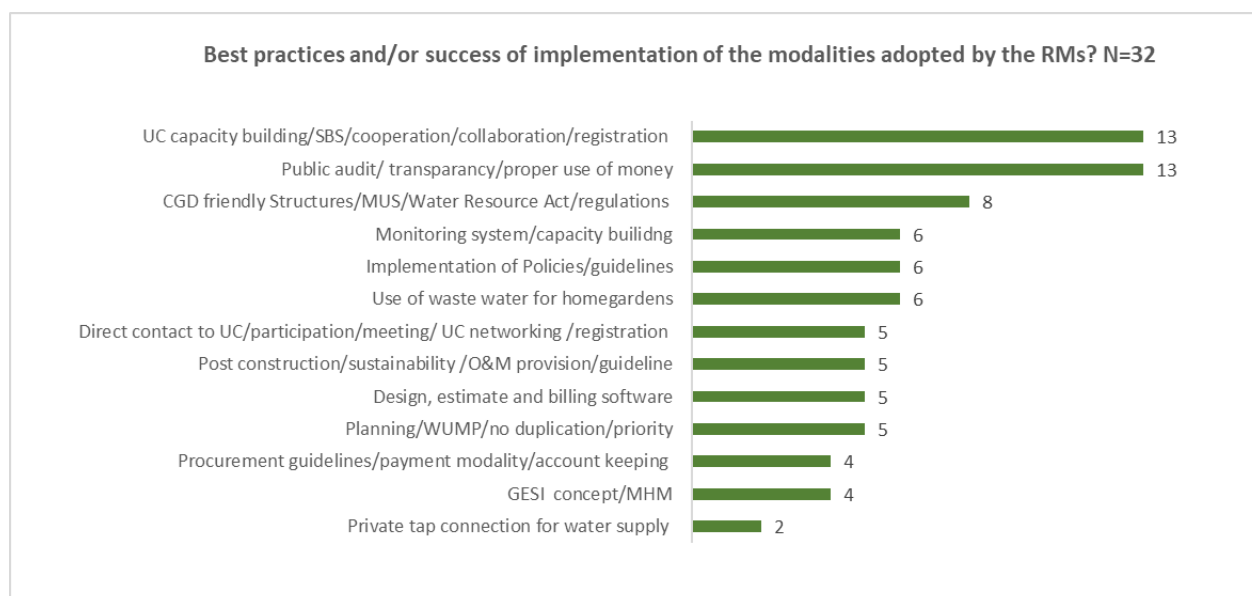
The responses are fully in line with the RM responses to the same question. The project staff have played a major role in promoting the development of policies for the RMs. The RMs have expressed a lack of policies to govern their work and within the WASH sector the project has responded to this need.

Q14: Which of the RVWRMP working modalities has the RM adopted in their regular activities?

The staff recognise that the use of the Step-by-Step guideline and practise has been adapted by the RMs as well as the procurement guidelines and public audits. This is in line with the RMs responses. The SBS and procurement guidelines have provided the RMs with clear instructions on HOW to implement activities in practical terms, and several of the RMs have expressed that they also apply these guidelines to other sectors of the RM than the WASH sector.



Q15: What are the best practices and/or successful implementation of the modalities adopted by the RMs?



The staff recognise that the RMs have had the most success by adopting the SBS and through that establish trustworthy and transparent collaboration with the communities for all the development activities undertaken by the RM. Furthermore, the RMs have had success in capacity development and the establishment and registration of UCs for scheme management which may ensure scheme sustainability.

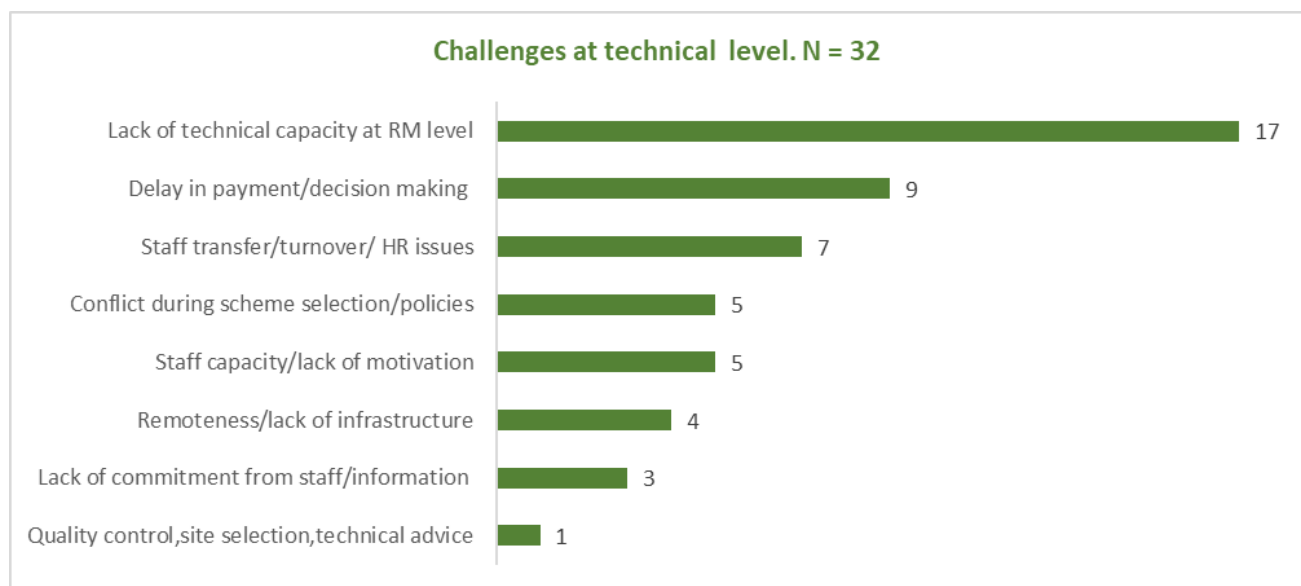
Q16: What have been the biggest challenges working with the RMs at technical level and decision-making level?

The biggest challenges at decision making level faced by the staff have been the conflicts arising due to political influence where the elected politicians attempt to surpass priorities established, for instance in

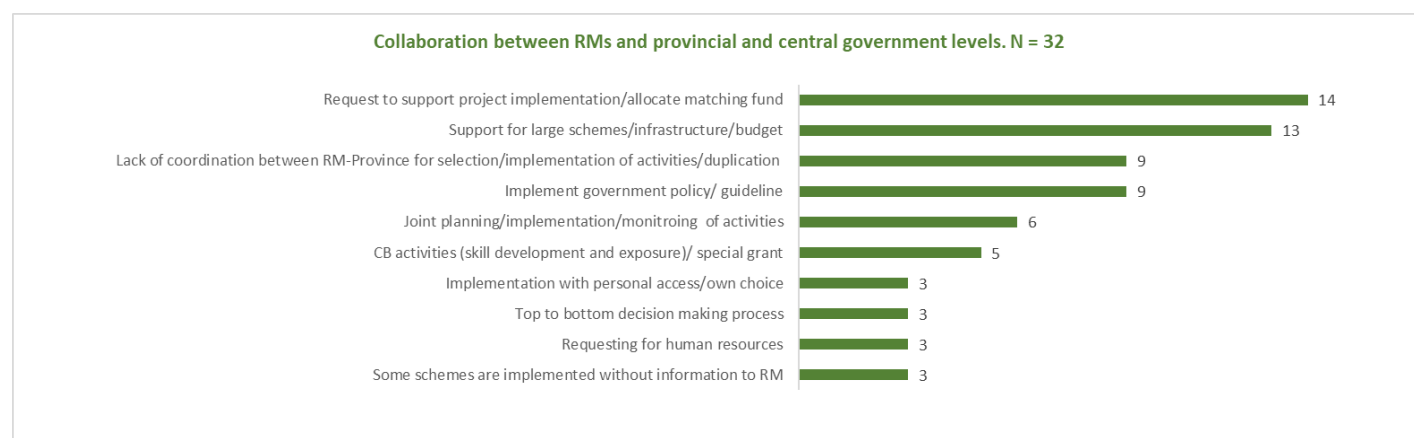
the WUMPs. Conflict resolution has not been part of their training, thus they did not know how to handle such incidents.



At technical level the staff have experienced the clear lack of RM technical capacity for the work to be undertaken. With the establishment of the WASH Units, which now have trained staff employed, this situation has improved. Concerning delays in payments of contractors it should be noted that the CEO and chief accountant of the RMs are employed directly by the central government and frequently transferred. The RMs therefore face periods without those two central positions for the proper functioning of the RM.

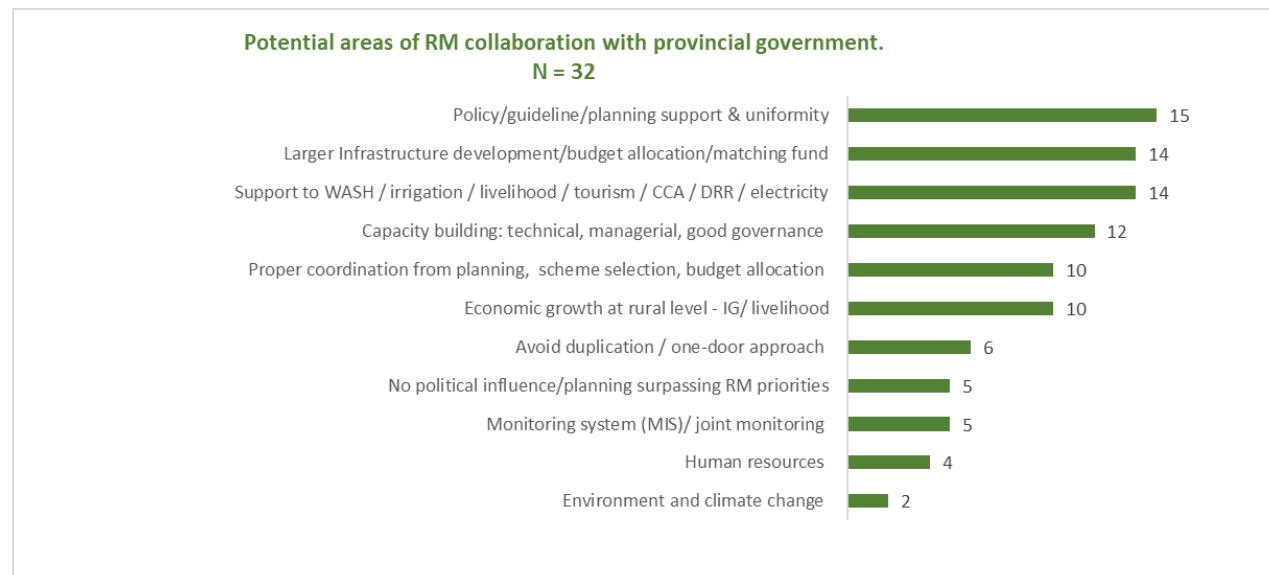


Q17: How does the RM collaborate with the provincial and federal government levels?



It is clear from the staff responses that the RMs wish to have support both technically and financially from the Provincial level. However, the actual collaboration and support are not forthcoming: provincial level planning and implementation of projects takes place without involvement of the RMs (nor with a view of priorities established at RM levels), and without much involvement of local stakeholders. This lack of coordination and collaboration leads to duplicate projects and Provinces bypassing the RM plans altogether. Some matching funds for projects are made available but no technical assistance for the implementation.

Q18: In your opinion what should be the area of collaboration between RM and provincial government?



From the responses, it is clear that the Provincial level could play a larger role in the RM development planning through providing overall provincial development plans – to be discussed and agreed upon in collaboration with the RMs – as well as support to the implementation of larger infrastructure projects involving more than one RM. Finally, the support to the institutional capacity development of the RMs is also a theme for collaboration.

4.4. Comparison of RM vs staff responses

Although the questionnaires for RM and project staff were different, many of the questions considered the same themes, allowing comparison. Six main common themes can be captured: 1) conducted project cooperation and activities in RM; 2) WASH Board and Unit related questions; 3) RM policy and strategy development related questions; 4) project modalities and practices adopted by RMs; 5) challenges faced; and 6) Cooperation of RM with Province and other partners.

Regarding **cooperation and activities** (RM Q1-4; staff Q1-5 and Q20) the responses were largely in line with one another. The concrete implementation of WASH, irrigation, and livelihoods including the related capacity development activities at community level, were highlighted as the core of the collaboration, especially at technical level. At council level, policy and WUMP development, institutional development of WASH Board and Unit, and values such as sustainability, transparency, commitment, and quality of work, as well as GESI were common to both RM and staff responses.

Regarding **WASH Board and WASH Unit** related questions (RM Q5-8; staff Q6-12), both RM and project staff had clearly internalised the concepts, including the roles and responsibilities. Especially the responses from staffers gave a very precise and analytical picture of both the board and the unit, whereas the RM responses were in line with them but less analytical. The project staff had also internalised the shift from project based RMSU to RM based WASH Unit, understanding the main differences very well. Both RM and project staff understood the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration as water is a crosscutting element that is relevant for several RM departments.

While the responses are principally in line with the RM responses about the continuation of the WASH Board and Unit, only 15 RM respondents were certain of the continuation of these units, meaning that it has been decided in the RM. The approaching local elections may have influenced the RM responses as only the new governments can decide on the continuation after the elections. The impression among project staff indicates a positive attitude towards the idea of continuation being common in the RMs among all relevant parties.

Regarding **policy development** (RM Q9-11; staff Q13), the responses were fully in line with each other considering policy development processes. Project supported RMs to craft several water and livelihoods, as well as GESI related policies (see Section 3.8. for more), involving GESI/MHM and CCA/DRM directives. All these policies have been formalised by RM Councils.

RMs have also **adopted several project modalities** (staff Q14-15), including Step-by-Step guideline for water supply scheme implementation, procurement guideline, and public auditing. The SBS and procurement guidelines have provided the RMs with HOW to do in practical terms and several of the RMs have expressed that they also apply these guidelines to other sectors of the RM than the WASH sector. The staff recognise that the RMs have had the most success by adopting the SBS and through that established trustworthy and transparent collaboration with the communities for all the development activities undertaken by the RM. Furthermore, the RMs have had success in capacity development and the establishment and registration of UCs for scheme management which may ensure schemes sustainability.

Regarding **challenges** (RM Q17; staff Q16), both RM and project staff reported that the main technical challenge is the lack of human resources and capacity of the RM staff, followed by the lack of guiding policies i.e. the 'how to' instructions. The project has contributed significantly to alleviate both these

issues (see Sections 3.4.-3.9). The lack of capacity of staff is generally observed as the main problem of all activities in the RM and this can be only improved by putting much more effort to quality education in the country as well as providing more benefits to professionals working in remote areas. Project staff furthermore saw political influence as a major challenge, an issue that naturally could not be reported by the interviewed RM groups involving politicians.

Regarding **RM cooperation with the Province and partners** (RM Q14-16; staff Q17-18), RVWRMP was mentioned most in the list of partners, followed by USAID related partners, the UN related partners, and local NGOs. Collaboration with the Province was seen mainly as alarmingly negative and poor: The provinces do not involve the RM in the activities they implement in the municipality, and there is a lack of coordination and communication, resulting in implementation of activities by the province without considering RM priorities and potential duplication of projects. The main sectors where the province acts were the road sector, construction sector, and agriculture, but also water supply sector. A much better coordination, mutual planning in all sectors, and communication between the RMs and Province is needed to overcome these problems.