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LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND
SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES

**WASH governance in support of NGO work:
trends and differences from field studies**

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Action Against Hunger commissioned five studies on WASH governance in the Philippines, Pakistan, Djibouti, South Sudan and Kenya in order to better inform its strategic planning and operations. Similar trends were found across the countries, such as the fragmentation of the WASH sector, the limited capacities at local level, and the lack of data or limited community engagement. Differences were also noted between legal frameworks, the maturity of national level institutions, and the inclusion of disaster risk management. This abstract provides a snapshot of the main findings and how it translated into operational recommendations for the organization. A practical manual to apply a governance lens into humanitarian and development programs was published by Action Against Hunger based on these experiences.

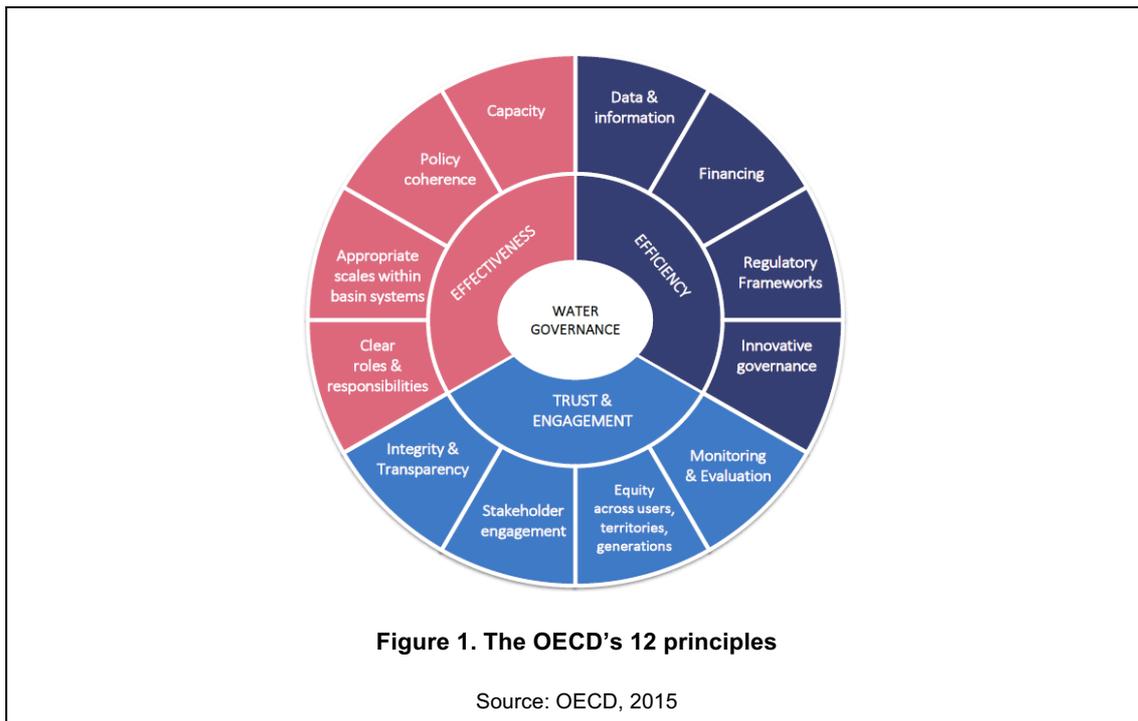
Introduction

Despite improvements over the recent years, 663 million people still lack access to improved drinking water sources, and 2.4 billion people don't have access to improved sanitation facilities in 2015 (1). Large disparities in access exist among countries and populations. Inequalities between rich and poor are found in all countries, both in urban and in rural areas. It has been already agreed that this water-crisis is not, at least not only, about scarcity, but mostly about water resource mismanagement. In other terms, it is a "governance crisis". Mismanagement, corruption, lack of appropriate institutions, bureaucratic inertia, and a shortage of new investments in building human capacity as well as physical infrastructure are largely responsible for today's situation.

Governance systems "determine who gets what water, when and how, and decide who has the right to water and related services." (2) Even if water governance is specific to each context, some good governance principles have been widely accepted. The OECD groups its 12 governance principles groups under three categories: efficiency, trust and engagement, and effectiveness (3), as displayed in Figure 1.

Working on water governance is a good opportunity for an NGO to enhance the impacts of its programs, through advocacy and strengthening of the institutions and the civil society. A study on the water governance set in a country allows the issues to be spotted, the reforms needed and the quick wins that the NGO can accomplish. Understanding the context allows the NGO to answer more effectively to the crisis and to the beneficiaries' needs. It is a way to think through its exit strategy and to hand over the water facilities knowing that they will be supported by an effective institutional set. Following and strengthening the governance principles will then help to respect other principles followed by NGOs. Indeed, they are linked with the right to water and sanitation, with humanitarian principles, and with the DAC principles (4).

Action against Hunger has been working on a governance approach. The NGO recently commissioned five WASH governance analysis in its country offices in the Philippines, Kenya, South Sudan, Djibouti and Pakistan, to inform its strategic planning, programming, and implementation. It also implements governance focused projects in Lebanon, Palestine and Gaza. This paper highlights some similarities and differences found in the five studies and the main programmatic consequences.



Analysis of the five case studies

Presentation of the five case studies

Five WASH governance analysis have been conducted on Action Against Hunger's country offices between 2013 and 2016:

1. In North Cotabato, Philippines, in 2013,
2. In Tana River County, Kenya, in 2014,
3. In Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan, in 2015,
4. In Djibouti and Balbala, Djibouti, in 2015,
5. In Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, in 2016.

All five case studies were meant to inform the organization's strategic planning and programming. They aimed at getting a clear, documented picture of the legal and institutional frameworks in regards to the WASH sector. This studies also pointed out hindrances in local governance that limit access to water for the most vulnerable and gender issues. Finally, the studies looked at the sustainability of the services and links between service provision and communities, to identify gaps and opportunities, and possible ways of improving it.

These studies lasted 2 to 4 months. The methodology used a mixed approach combining qualitative analysis, through interviews of stakeholders of the WASH sector at national, regional and local level, focus group discussions, and literature reviews, with a quantitative survey using the KAP survey methodology at household level (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices).

Main similarities identified

Several thematic trends emerged from the five case studies. This section presents the main similarities identified.

Fragmented WASH sectors at local level

Fragmentation of the WASH sector at local level impacts the efficiency and the access to WASH services for the most vulnerable, as it is complicated to know who is responsible for what, but also as it can lead to duplication and omission of needed projects.

In Pakistan, the governance of the WASH sector is experiencing issues of fragmentation and duplications of roles and responsibilities, at national level, at provincial level, and at local level. Reporting lines are not

clear and the decentralization process is taking longer than expected. Coordination at most levels mainly happens on a need-basis, and there is no official platform for it. Big projects at provincial and at district levels have however brought specific coordination platforms.

In Djibouti, there is no official coordination platform, neither among the institutions, nor between the other stakeholders. Sharing of information, data, and project planning is rare and weakens the actions of the institutions and of the other actors. The division of roles and responsibilities at local level and with the national institutions is not clear, and the general strategy of the WASH sector lacks coherence.

Limited capacities at local level

Lack of capacities at local level is often a constraint for the WASH sector to sustain the coverage of water and sanitation services. Additional capacity assessments and trainings are usually needed, along with operation and maintenance consideration.

In the Philippines, to achieve universal coverage of the country, the International Water Association estimated that 488 000 additional para-technicians and between 13 576 and 80 810 additional employees were needed. In rural area, like North Cotabato, the lack of human resources was less of a problem than in urban areas, since the communities coped through their own involvement, but they were not trained enough, as often observed with community based management mechanisms. This resulted in a lower productivity and efficiency. This situation was exacerbated in conflict and disaster-prone areas, because trained people preferred to change location to protect themselves and their families (5).

Low availability of reliable data

Lack of reliable data has consequences on effective planning of projects, transparency and accountability of institutional activities, and on mid and long term vision of the sector.

In Pakistan, significant gaps in hydrogeological data and infrastructures mapping have been highlighted. Official monitoring tools are not used or not working well. A water information management system is currently being set up in in both KP and Sindh to tackle this issue. The absence of a good monitoring tool limits the ability of the county to be completely relevant in its planning and operations.

In South Sudan, the lack of reliable data is an issue for the WASH sector. It is caused by a lack of resources and capacities to do monitoring for the institutions responsible for it, a lack of political and personal will, and the low prioritization of this aspect.

Low focus on water resource management

The case studies show a low focus on water resource management, threatening the sustainability of access to water services. Indeed, in Pakistan, water is becoming less and less available, due to population growth, overexploitation of groundwater, and climate change. Coliforms, salt, arsenic, heavy metals, and nitrates often contaminate water also. Even if the federal government is drafting a Water Policy, the tensions between users and between provinces are growing.

In the Philippines, the abundance of water along with the absence of alarming signals did not encourage the population and the institutions to really protect water resources. Yet, specialists forecasted a shortage of water in eight of the nineteen most important watersheds of the country and in the biggest cities before 2025 (6). The causes of this shortage were numerous, among them: pollution, inefficient use of water, waste of water, weak protection of the resource, population growth, and climate change. We can also see that water resources protection is not a priority through the budget figures: only 1.57 million US dollars are dedicated to it, which is 0.3% of the budget dedicated to water (7). Laws exist on water resource protection but were not often implemented.

Weak link with the communities

In all case studies, the link between the institutions in charge of water service provision and the communities is weak, which causes more vulnerability for the population, as they would not know whom to contact in case of a problem, and as the institutions cannot plan based on actual needs.

For example, in Kenya, in Tana River County rural areas, the Water Management Committee (WMC) model is prioritised. Only half of the WMC surveyed met regularly, and had open communication channels with the community. The committees face issues of transparency and accountability. The link between the WMC and the counties is rarely established and most of the time, the WMC surveyed did not know whom to call at the county level in case of a problem.

In Pakistan, the link between communities and institutions also needs to be strengthened. Interesting approaches, such as the PATS (Pakistan Approach to Total Sanitation) and the LSOs (Local Support Organisations), are steps in this direction. But the decision making processes need to be more participatory. The household survey shows a very limited participation (55%), due to a lack of existing processes, their uselessness or the lack of interest from the population. The trust in the people responsible for the water is low in both districts surveyed. Political interferences are common in the WASH sector and take the form of political hiring, corruption, and biased selection of project locations.

Main differences identified

The five case studies also present differences. This section presents the main differences identified.

Diverse levels of fragmentation of the WASH sector at national level

Fragmentation of the sector at national level impacts the whole sector, as the regulations, big projects, and general vision for the WASH sector are decided at national level.

In South Sudan, due to the number of stakeholders, the lack of resources, and lack of communication, the WASH sector is experiencing a poor coordination at national level. The responsibility chain between national, state and county levels are not clear enough, notably regarding sanitation and environment, where there is no national policy.

In the Philippines, over 40 institutions were involved in the water sector, and around ten of them are involved in the water supply sector. Several institutions supervised of the sector. With so many institutions involved, there should be one supervising their work; no one has taken this function, despite recent initiatives like the Clean Water Act, that aimed at defining better the roles and responsibilities. No institution is responsible towards the government and the citizens of the implementation of the national policies and targets. This means that none has the competency, or the political interest, to implement a holistic program for the sector. As highlighted by a key informant: “at national level, [...] there is no concentrated frame to rationalize WASH governance” (8).

However, in Pakistan, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined at national level. No official coordination mechanism is dedicated to the WASH sector but a WASH cell is being created within the Division of Climate Change that will be responsible for exchanges among provinces and among ministries.

Diverse levels of legal frameworks

The case studies found that the legal frameworks were more or less clear and easy to navigate, sometimes following reforms. For example, in Kenya, the new Constitution 2010 delegates more power to local government, and gives Kenyans a bill of rights recognizing the right to water and sanitation. The country got divided into 47 semi-autonomous counties, responsible of water service provision, while water resource management remained with the national authorities. The Water Act 2002 was being revised and the content of the next Water Bill was yet unclear.

In Pakistan, the laws and regulations are quite clear: following the devolution process, water and sanitation services were devolved to the provinces and the local government ordinances gave that responsibility to the local governments. Provincial drinking-water and sanitation policies are either approved or in the process.

In South Sudan, a few regulatory documents already exist and several institutions are involved. A Water Policy was adopted in 2007. Several other laws and policies are related to the WASH sector, such as the Health policy and the Local government act. There is no specific legislation to guide the whole sector and define roles and responsibilities of the different institutions and levels of government. A new Water Bill has been drafted (Water Bill 2013), which aims at clarifying roles and responsibilities. It is still being negotiated. There is no streamline sanitation policy and no environmental policy yet at national level, and many states do not have a water policy.

Diverse levels of capacities of the WASH sector at national level

Capacities at national level are key to an efficient WASH sector.

South Sudan, as a new country, is facing big challenges in capacity development. It is difficult to find qualified staff in the country. An overall strategy exists to develop and manage human resources, however funds are lacking and this strategy is not being brought at the state or local level. There has been a large number of institutional and governance projects implemented for national and state level authorities in the

WASH Sector in the past 5 years, specifically by USAID, JICA, GIZ and DFID. There is a lot to do on these issues but the focus on institution building is heading in the right direction.

In the Philippines, however, capacities at the national level are good. The study identified several universities and colleges with programmes dedicated to water and sanitation, and the staff employed by the national institutions are trained and competent. Trainings are available for the staff.

Diverse focus on disaster risk management

Disaster risk management is becoming a growing focus at international level, and climate change impacts are already visible in many regions of the world, leading to more disasters.

In Pakistan, disaster risk management is a growing subject in the country, especially in KP. There are now well-established institutions at provincial level, and the districts are moving forward. Capacity building and awareness are still needed, along with dedicated teams for emergencies. Similarly, in the Philippines, disaster risk management has dedicated institutions, coordination mechanisms, and regulations.

However, in South Sudan, where there are risks of water shortages and disasters, there is very low focus on mitigation and adaptation to the risks. Climate change will impact the country, but due to lack of reliable data, the war context and the limited capacities, it has not been a priority for the government. Kenya initiated a reflection on transitioning away from emergency response through a stronger disaster risk management, but largely limited to droughts.

Lessons learnt and programmatic recommendations

As a result of each WASH governance analysis, several recommendations were made to the Action Against Hunger country offices in charge, in order to improve programming and impact. A few similar recommendations were made across the studies, including:

1. Promote coordination between WASH stakeholders, through an official coordination platform, advocacy for more information sharing, and strengthening of the WASH clusters.
2. Develop capacity building of the WASH institutions, particularly at local level, through a capacity assessment and a coherent capacity building plan.
3. Bring together and strengthen the small private stakeholders, especially the small water providers and the private sector, which is part of the spare parts chain.
4. Create or strengthen links between the communities and the institutions, through registration of community organisations, community-based advocacy and meetings.
5. Support disaster risk management initiatives.
6. Support the establishment of reliable data monitoring system, regarding water resources, infrastructures, stakeholders' activities, etc.
7. Advocate for higher focus on water resources management.

Conclusion

The five case studies presented here have been conducted by ACF over the past three years. They show the impact of governance on access to WASH for the most vulnerable people. The methodology and reporting has evolved to be more useful to the missions. They have informed ACF and its partners in the missions involved, but also internationally in conferences and reports. Following the WASH governance analysis, the missions amended their programming and strategic planning in order to increase their impacts. The findings of the studies have been shared with a wide range of stakeholders in the sector and are in tune with the current trends: increased stakeholder engagement, transparency, broader vision of the WASH sector, partnerships, etc. Further research would be needed to draw models from these experiences.

ACF intends to continue leading such WASH governance studies, while deepening its research on the subject through a PhD, and has also started implemented WASH governance focused programs in Lebanon and Palestine.

Building on its WASH governance experience and to support its operations and partners, Action Against Hunger published in 2016 a manual on WASH governance. It has been published in French, English and Spanish.

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Notes

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