

41st WEDC International Conference, Egerton University, Nakuru, Kenya, 2018

**TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
AND RESILIENT WASH SERVICES**

**Citizen voice for WASH-IWRM integration in devolved
governance: lessons from Watershed Kenya**

I. Gai & M. Jeths (Kenya)

PAPER 2968

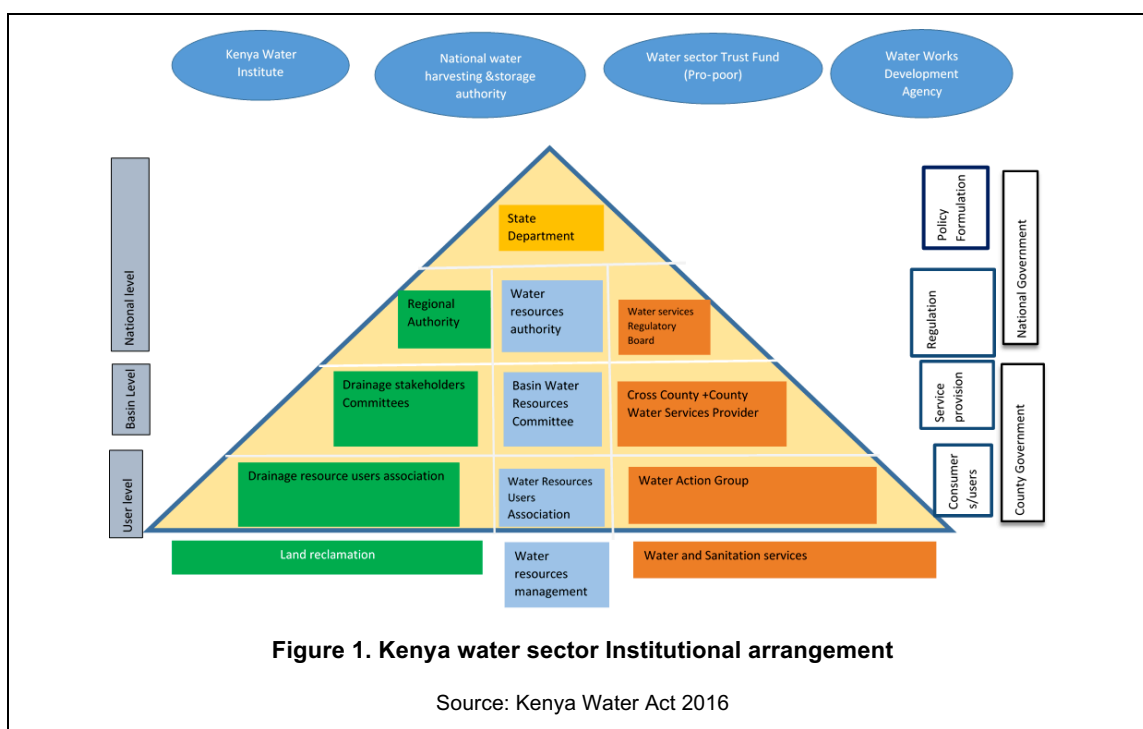
Sustainable Development Goal 6 requires closer links between water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and water resources management (WRM), a political process which invokes the importance of CSOs and citizens' voices where the interest and needs of the WASH sector are negotiated with the other water using sub-sectors. This combination of voice is catalytic to the realization of good water governance encompassing: responsive policies, access to information, inclusive stakeholder engagement, gender and other vulnerabilities mainstreaming, safe guards in WRM. This paper seeks to provide insights from Watershed-Empowering Citizens, a strategic partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IRC, Simavi, Wetlands International and Akvo. It outlines experiences of Watershed Kenya Programme in Laikipia and Kajiado Counties, where the Water Dialogue Forum (WDF) model is adopted to empower citizens to meaningful engage in citizen-state dialogue for development initiatives, promote coordinated planning at catchment level and avoid duplication of initiatives.

Background and rationale

Sustainable water management has become a critical issue globally, due to a long historical period of rapid population growth and mismanagement of natural resources, which combined, have resulted in diminishing fresh water resources both in quantity and quality underscoring the interdependence of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and water resources management (WRM).

Governments now acknowledge that water sector policy development, priority setting and initiatives, however well-intentioned, need stakeholder engagement for their implementation on the ground. However, particularly in developing countries such as Kenya, declining citizens' trust in institutions is a threat towards this vision for building the social and political acceptability of related decisions, and reducing the potential for conflicts over water.

In the case of the Kenya water sector, through the Water Act 2016, stakeholder engagement is structured in a vertical relationship between the national, regional and local levels for the two subsectors i.e. Water Supply Services and Water Resources Management, as illustrated in figure 1 below. The local level of the structure consists of Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs) who carry out water resource management and Water Service Providers (WSPs) who are responsible for the provision of water and sewerage services. The consumers are at the bottom of this structured vertical relationship and are the end-users of the water. The Water Act gives to county governments the mandate for water and sanitation service provision and that of the development of county water works. Water service and water resource regulation remains the responsibility of the national government, as does the management of national public water works, i.e. water works that are cross-county and funded from the national budget.



However, observations from the annual sector conference (November 2016), and the Annual Water sector review report (2014/2015-2015/2016), indicate integrity challenges and specifically recommend better enforcement of ‘good governance in the water sector at all levels to improve overall performance and achieve value for money. The potential of integrity issues with the current structure was heightened by the show supremacy demonstrated during the conference, with County government representatives demanding a stronger role in managing sector development projects and financial planning, while the national government representatives underlined the need to ensure coherence and coordinate programmes centrally, pointing to weaknesses in reporting from the county level and a need for stronger accountability. This gives an insight into the challenges the sector is grappling with under the devolved framework, in the form of lack of key stakeholders understanding their mandate, inadequate capacities and resources.

The Watershed programme role out

Against this background the Watershed programme had a context analysis undertaken including a stakeholder power analysis which identified the key drivers issues and challenges of the WASH and WRM sector in Kenya. This context informed the programmes theory of change (ToC) towards the realisation of sustainable WASH for all. The ToC has three strategic pathways comprising:

1. Facilitation of integrated participatory planning and management on WASH and WRM through engagement with relevant government actors
2. Improved availability, accessibility and use of data/evidence for informed decision making and evidence based lobby & advocacy in WASH and WRM
3. Capacity building of CSO’s and citizens through citizens groups as to strengthen accountability relationships between users and duty bearers for sustainable & inclusive service delivery in WASH and WRM.

CSO capacity strengthening

Watershed’s starting point has been the capacity strengthening of Watershed partners in Kenya through Watershed supported trainings which provided vital skills and knowledge for CSOs leading to coherent programme implementation. This has translated into lobby and advocacy (L&A) strategies that focus on lobbying for WASH/WRM integration at policy, plans and practice levels; enhanced social inclusion especially for vulnerable people as well as increased equity in budgetary allocation to address the WASH/WRM sector by County governments of Kajiado and Laikipia.

The programmes policy influencing approach is a collaborative one, engaging with government via multi-stakeholder fora, stimulating improved public participation and transparency around strategic government policies, plans and budgets and effectively monitoring them. The main assumption is that a collaborative approach using multi-stakeholder fora will stimulate governments to take up the suggestions and increase their own transparency and performance. Besides direct engagement by the Watershed partners, they also facilitate meaningful engagement by citizen groups into these planning processes.

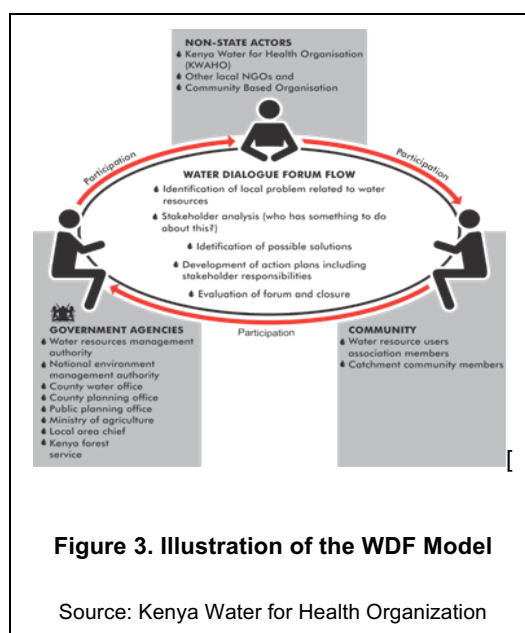
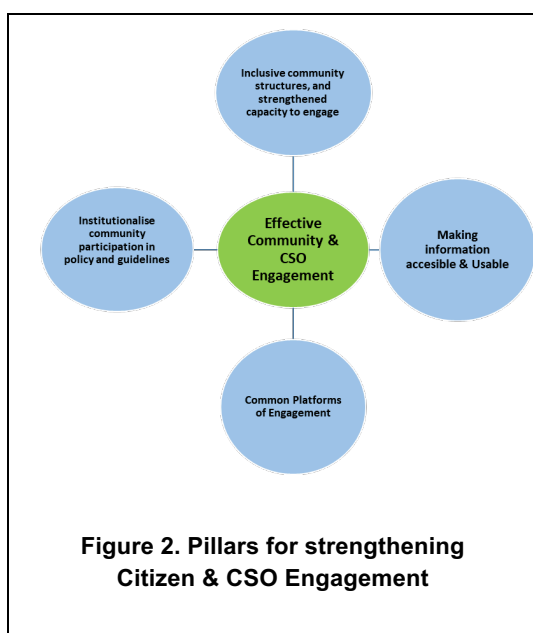
How engagement with citizen groups has been strengthened

In response to the issues and challenges raised in the Watershed context analysis report, notably on; lack of capacity and willingness to enforce rules, insufficient cooperation of WASH and WRM actors, lack of information system undermining already weak planning efforts for WASH, non-transparent investment planning and inadequate citizen engagement and monitoring tools; Watershed Kenya identified the following pillars to inform the operational strategy to strengthen citizen engagement based on the program's social accountability pathway.

- Inclusive community structures and strengthened capacity to engage
- Making information accessible and usable
- Institutionalise community participation in policy and guidelines
- Common platforms of engagement

To actualize the pillars (see figure 2), in both Laikipia and Kajiado baseline surveys were conducted assessing the level of citizen engagement including barriers for effective participation. This informed the capacity building initiatives for citizen groups focusing on understanding county processes and engagement including planning, budgeting and monitoring of county programs. Through the participation pillar citizens groups –e.g. WRUAs, people with disabilities (PWDs) women groups were mobilised to participate in the CIDP (County Integrated Development Plan) planning processes both in Kajiado and Laikipia Counties. The CIDP outlines County Government plans, programmes and budgets for 2018 -2022 which forms a basis for accountability of current County administration going forward.

The program also adopted the Water Dialogue Forum (WDF) as a platform for dialogue and feedback that brings together two groups of water actors: Right Holders (individuals and groups with valid claims to access services) and Duty Bearers (state and non-state actors with obligations to provide services to people). It facilitates sharing of sector policies, strategies and plans as well as promoting joint planning by the water actors at the local level. The WDF was not set up as a parallel platform but as a mechanism to strengthen already existing systems at county level and sub-county level to ensure institutional embedding and sustainability. Prior to the WDF, the two sub-sectors actors in the counties were working in silos and only reaching out to citizen groups when they needed information from the citizens. The WDF has created a two-way track communication platform that puts the citizens at the centre of consultations and planning; an improvement from the top-down track that was initially there. As an empowerment tool, it enables the local citizen members to provide indigenous knowledge and understand service performance issues consequently giving service level delivery feedback to government agencies for review and further action. WDF also promotes coordinated planning at county, sub-county, catchment and sub-catchment level as an integral strategy to avoid duplication of activities by the different stakeholders.



These WDFs at the different levels address the challenges of citizen indifference to catchment conservation, pollution of the catchment areas e.g. open defecation by residents in the targeted areas; duplication of activities by different actors, degradation of the catchments, conflicts between water service providers and the catchment. Lack of citizen participation and representation in county planning and budgeting process results in county programs that are not responsive to citizens needs.

Positive results from the WDF has encouraged the county governments to adopt the model as a strategic tool in meaningful engagement of citizens in the county planning and development agenda.

Our outcomes

- Watershed has facilitated horizontal integration between the different line departments following the identified challenge of institutional fragmentation in the county. Through the second WDF, the inaugural county water sector working group and Technical Working Group was established in Laikipia and in Kajiado respectively. The forums are promoting inclusive planning between service provision and resource management from government agencies and citizen groups. Through these forums, the county government has worked with WRA and other stakeholders including CSOs and Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF) in key processes and activities including the development of the Laikipia County Water Master Plan, in planning for the Laikipia governor's Water Conference, facilitation of the development of the second generation County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and in the development of the Laikipia water bill;
- Through the first WDF in which citizens expressed the need to have a forum to understand the County's Water sector agenda, the first Laikipia County Water Conference was held with the milestone of citizen groups presenting a memoranda to the Governor on their expectations in reference to water and sanitation sector agenda in the county. The conference also provided room for participatory decision making where the county presented the water master plan and water bill to the citizens of Laikipia;
- Diverse citizen groups (WRUA,s, PWDs and women) have been mobilised to participate in the CIDPs planning processes (for 2018-2022) both in Kajiado and Laikipia Counties which forms a basis for accountability of current County administration going forward;
- The WDF has enabled CSOs in Laikipia to make strides to reaching the last mile, in promotion of voice and participation of people with disabilities and other marginalised groups at sub county level; through the CSOs lobbying efforts, the County government appointed a person living with disabilities and representatives from the WRUAs as part of the budget committee. Strategic partnerships between Watershed Partners with other stakeholders including the federation of female lawyers and United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) have profiled inclusion of marginalised groups in key County processes including in planning. elevated the voice of the marginalized; and

- Cross learning amongst the Watershed Partners in Laikipia and Kajiado has led to the Kajiado implementing partners adopting the WDF model enabling the County to successfully draft three policies with Citizen's participation i.e. water policy, sand harvesting and charcoal burning policies.

Challenges faced and corresponding mitigation

- Supremacy battles related to roles and responsibilities between the two levels of government i.e. County and National government. Watershed partners have addressed this through the formation of an inclusive Technical Working Group (TWG)) at the County level bringing together County and national government line ministries departments in the County;
- Lack of information and inadequate skills of citizens to engage with relevant government structures impacted on mobilization efforts of citizen participation in county processes. To address this, the Watershed partners have undertaken capacity strengthening workshops for citizen groups where citizen animators are identified to take lead in catchment and sub-catchment level campaigns on key processes to rally citizen participation in Key processes. Watershed has also lobbied for the representation of people with disability and other citizen groups e.g. WRUAs in key county planning and budgeting committees.

Negotiations instituted between communities and water managers and water managers with other water using sub-sectors

Watershed in the first year of implementation has contributed to some concessions between different water users and resource managers based on problems collectively identified in the WDF platforms. The negotiations the program has contributed to include:

- The need for all abstractors, notably from agriculture sector in the targeted catchment area in Laikipia County, to install measuring devices at their abstraction points to curb the challenge of over abstraction. This has been strengthened through the information campaigns and awareness initiatives with water users and citizen groups to enhance collaboration in water resources regulation; and
- The Watershed program negotiated with Nyahururu Water Company, one of the main WSPs in Laikipia County, to engage WRUAs in management of select drinking water access points (water kiosks) as part of strengthening collaboration with the resource management actors whilst reinforcing local citizen ownership.

Conclusion

The experience from the Watershed programme as highlighted in the preceding texts above, notably the application of the WDF model, can be replicated and taken to scale in any given context albeit upon taking into consideration context specific dynamics for fitting practise. For realization of an effective citizen and CSO engagement model for sustainable WASH/WRM integration, we have learned that it is essential to observe the following basic principles:

- Understanding of incentives and drivers for citizen engagement; this involves an acceptance that from the perspective of improving outcomes at the citizen level, drawing boundaries around the nature of citizen engagement based on the stakeholders in any particular instance, the nature of citizen and the holistic approach required to address issues at the citizen level. To this end mapping of enabling spaces and constraints for priority setting is key;
- Institutional mapping and targeted capacity building;
- Evidence building and learning groups through improvement of availability, accessibility and use of data/evidence for informed decision making and evidence based lobbying and advocacy;
- Instituting Monitoring and effective feedback tools such as citizen report Card, Equitable Access Score Card;
- Understanding of social- economic and cultural particularities that gives an insight of the network of relationships that enable a given citizen to stay connected.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to extend thanks to Watershed Partner Organizations based in Netherlands and Kenya for their innovative contribution in the Watershed Kenya Work Package Programme design which has inspired and informed the content of this Paper. I am especially grateful to Simavi team Martine Jeths,

Esther de Vreede and Patrick Mwanzia for their insights with the review of this Paper, and Catherine Mwangi (Mrs.) for being supportive and nurturing my creativity for responsive strategies in her capacity as the Executive Director for Kenya Water for Health Organization.

References

Water Act, 2016 (No. 43 of 2016). Legislation. Kenya
Annual Water sector review report. 2014/2015 -2015/2016. Kenya
Watershed Context Analysis Document. 2017. Programme Document.
Watershed Outcome Harvesting report. 2018. Programme Document

Note

The Citizen and CSO engagement framework discussed herein is the results of literature review and field practice piloted from previous initiatives by some of the Watershed Partners albeit improved through implementation of the Watershed Program.

Contact details

Irene Gai is a Programmes Coordinator at Kenya Water for Health Organization (KWAHO) and national trainer on MHM, with specific interest in social inclusion and gender mainstreaming in WASH sector including Citizen and institutional capacity building, Martine Jeths is a senior programme officer at Simavi in the Netherlands mainly involved in WASH programmes in Kenya and Malawi with a specific interest in capacity strengthening of CSO's to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Irene Gai
61470, 00200 Nairobi
Tel: +254 727 597 413
Email: ajurgai@gmail.com / i.gai@kwaho.org
www: kwaho.org

Martine Jeths
Naritaweg 135, 1043 BS Amsterdam, NL
Tel: + 31 (0)88 313 15 83
Email: martine.jeths@simavi.nl
www: simavi.org
