Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment

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IMPROVING QUALITY OF SERVICES AT THE WATER SOURCE
The Roles of Different Actors

1. Introduction

Access to clean and safe water is critical for a healthy population. In relation to this, government of Uganda's policy objective is 'to provide sustainable safe water within easy reach and hygienic sanitation facilities, to 77 percent of the population in rural areas and 100 percent of the urban population by the year 2015, with a minimum of 80 percent effective use and functionality of facilities'.

Despite reforms including decentralization and liberalization coupled with increases in funding, access to clean and safe water remains below target levels. Allocation to the sector reached UGX 172.24 bn in 2009/10 but access to safe and clean water remains at 65 percent and 66 percent in urban and rural areas respectively.[1] Functionality of rural water sources has stagnated between 80 to 83 percent for the last nine years.[2] A census of all water sources in Uganda by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in 2010 showed that technical breakdown accounted for 45 percent of non-functionality of water sources nationwide. Technical breakdown is largely attributed to poor maintenance particularly for relatively newly constructed water sources.

ACODE between 2011 and 2012 carried out a study on governance in the Water and Roads Sectors in Uganda. The study focused on rural water provision[3] in five districts of Uganda including Nebbi, Soroti, Ntungamo, Mbale and Wakiso. Evidence from the study points to three key factors that determine service delivery outcomes for point water sources in terms of functionality of water source, cleanliness of the surrounding and satisfaction of users:

(i) Having designated caretakers for water sources is associated with better service delivery outcomes. The outcomes are even better where the caretakers are paid or provided with other forms of incentives.

(ii) Contributions to maintenance of water sources by users of water sources is marginal with the contribution in rural areas being relatively lower than in more urban areas. This can be attributed

1 Uganda Water and Environment Sector Performance Report, 2010

2 Uganda Water and Environment Sector Performance Report, 2012

3 Rural water supply refers to those technologies that are predominant in rural areas including boreholes, shallow wells and protected springs. In many urban areas, these technologies are used alongside piped water systems.

to negative perceptions among users against contributing for water and poverty which is more severe in rural areas. The situation is compounded by the spatial distribution of water sources in rural areas which in most cases implies traversing longer distances in search of water when a single water source breaks down.

(iii) There is inadequate support and supervision given to Water User Committees (WUCs).

2. Performance of the Water Sector

According to the Uganda Water Supply Atlas,[4]Uganda has over 80,790 point water sources supplying domestic water, majority of which have been constructed in the last decade (2001-2010). The most predominant water supply technology is deep boreholes serving up to 38 percent of the population with access to safe water. This is followed by protected springs (26 percent) and shallow wells (25 percent).

The water and environment sector performance report (2012) shows that while progress on achievement of some sector performance targets appears to be on course, there remains a lot of work to be done for most as shown in the table below. Two years to the end of the planning horizon for the current projections, substantial effort is needed to improve access, functionality of water sources, per capita investment especially in urban areas and constitution and composition of Water and Sanitation Committees.

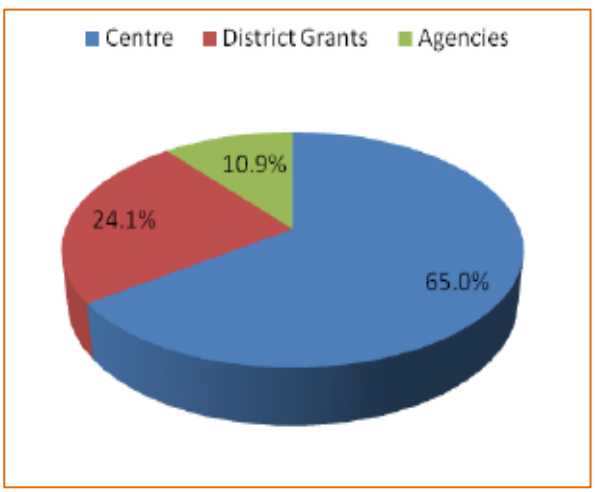
Table 1: Performance of Sector on Selected Indicators

Indicator	Achievements						
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Target 2014/15
Access % of people within 1km (rural) and 0.2km (urban) of an improved water source	Rural	63%	65%	65%	65%	64%	77%
	Urban	61%	66%	67%	66%	68%	100%
Functionality % of improved water sources that are functional at time of spot-check (rural)	Rural	82%	83%	80%	83%	82%	90%
	Urban	89%	89%	90%	91%	85%	95%
Per capita investment cost: (US$)	Rural	$44	$43	$41	$47	52%	$45
	Urban	$93	$64	$46	$40	77%	$85
Water quality: % of water samples that comply with national standards (Protected Source)	e.coli		70%	57%	93%	95%	95%
Management: % of water points with actively functioning water & sanitation committees	Rural	65%	68%	70%	71%	75%	95%
	Urban	65%	69%	89%	71%	92%	95%
Gender: % of water user committees/water boards with women holding key positions	Rural	63%	71%	85%	81%	75%	95%
	Urban	71%	15%	37%	39%	47%	95%

Source: Water and Environment Sector Performance Report 2012

3. Funding to the Water Sector

The main sources of funding identified in the water and sanitation sector performance report (2009/10) include i) government funding, ii) donor funding in the form of loans and grants and, iii) Non-governmental organisations. However, reports show that local governments on average contribute less than three percent of their budget. There is limited information on the amount of resources districts allocate to water and sanitation.



Source: Water and Environment Sector Performance Report (2010)

4 Ministry of Water and Environment, 2010

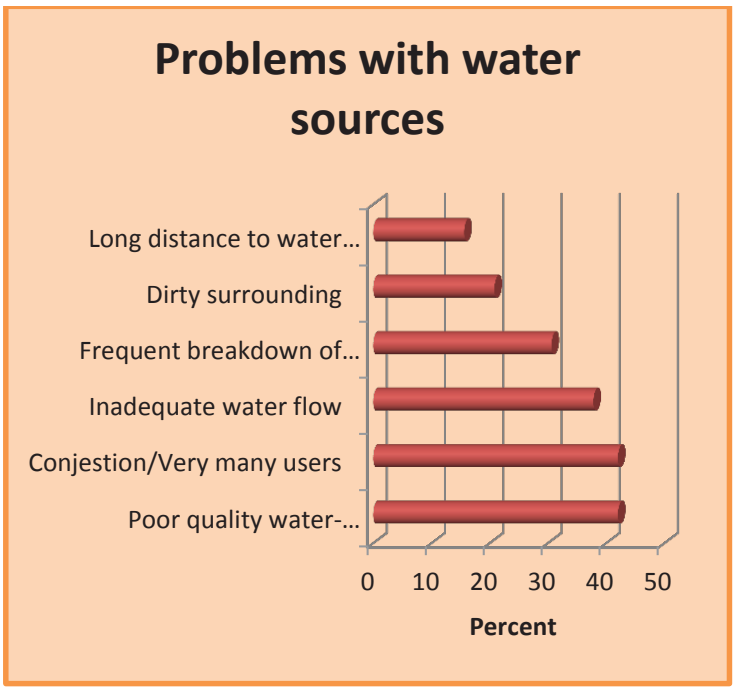
On the allocation of funds within the sector, the central government, which comprises the MWE and the Directorate of Water Development (DWD), claims the largest portion of the funds at 65 percent. The share accruing to districts and other agencies is 24.1 percent and 10.9 percent respectively. This kind of appropriation is unfair to the districts which are responsible for direct service provision. The allocation going to districts needs to be increased to enable them do more on rehabilitation and maintenance of water sources especially in deep rural areas with limited alternative sources of water (water stressed areas).

4. Management of Water Sources under CBMS and Implications for Quality of Services

Management of rural water follows the National Framework for Operation and Maintenance of Rural Water Supplies (2004).

Under the framework, water sources are managed under the Community Based Maintenance System (CBMS)[4] which assigns the responsibility of day to day management of water sources to Water User Committees (WUCs). Ideally, water users under the stewardship of WUCs contribute to provision of water by providing land, making a contribution towards the cost of constructing the water sources which varies according to technology and from one place to another, and meeting the costs of maintenance. A nationwide census by the Ministry of Water and Environment (2010) revealed that, only 47 percent of water sources had functional Water User Committees. This is in contradiction of figures in the Water Sector Performance reports for that period that put the figure 71 percent in both rural and urban areas. The study by ACODE found that functionality of WUCs for newly constructed water sources is higher. This is attributed to the fact that it is a requirement for provision of a water source to any community under CBMS.

The study also revealed that water is largely collected at no cost from the water source which means that there is little or no money for maintenance of the water sources. At the time of the survey, 55 percent of the WUCs covered reportedly had no money at hand. Only 23 percent of the WUCs had more than UGX 40,000 which is barely enough to cover a Hand Pump Mechanic's fees for two repairs. Responses of water source users on how they access water showed that up to 42 percent access water from point water sources at no cost while 45 percent attested to contributing something to maintenance of their water source with most contributions being made when the water source breaks down.



5. Contributions to operations and Maintenance by Users

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4 A system in which the users thorough WUG are responsible for management of water and sanitation facilities including financing maintenance from user contributions.

6. Accountability by Water User Committees

Accountability by the WUCs is very important because it may impact on the level of collections that the committee is able to realize. In the absence of accountability, users of water sources loose trust in the management and may even refuse to contribute towards maintenance of the water source by subscription or paying user charges. Results from the study show that, accountability by WUCs is poor as depicted in the figure below. Only 40 percent of the WUCs had lists of users; fewer still (17 percent) attested to having records of their finances; 21 percent reportedly issued receipts to users upon payment of their contribution and; 12 held meetings with users on a regular basis.

6.1. Support to WUCs

Under the CBMS, the District Water Office (DWO) is responsible for capacity building and supervision of water user groups in operation and maintenance. The Directorate of Community-Based Services (DCBS) or Community Development Office is supposed to work with the DWO on matters related to community sensitization and mobilization pre and post construction of water sources. The predominant type of support besides construction and rehabilitation of water sources is training and orientation of WUC members (28 percent) and this support is by officials from the sub-county, district and NGOs. Other kinds of support include mobilization of communities to plan for maintenance and reporting water source issues beyond the capacity of the WUC to higher authorities. Thus, besides training and orientation of WUCs which is a requirement for construction, WUCs receive nearly no support from the district.

Table 2: Contribution to Operation and Maintenance by users

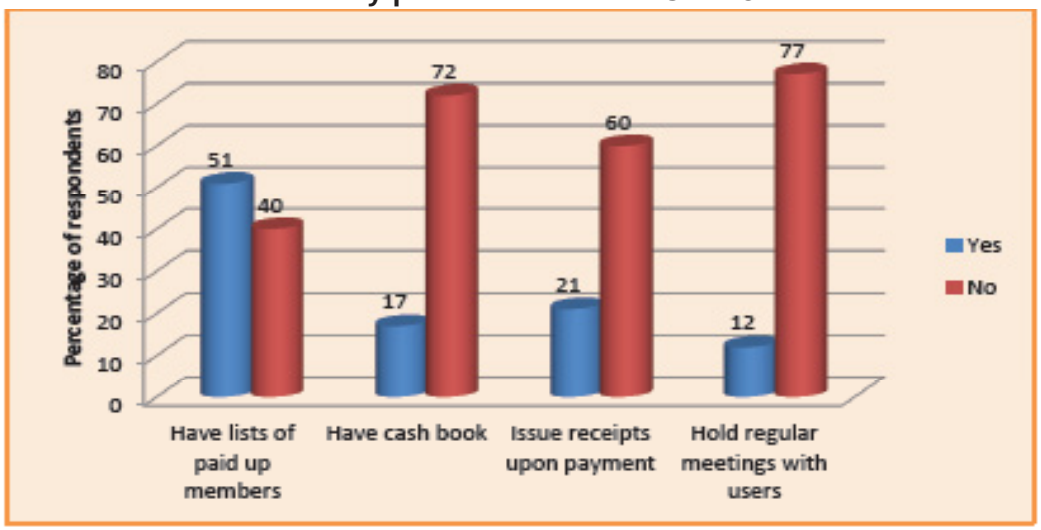
Indicator	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Percentile 25
Amount of money held by committee (Shs)	64,347	40,000	1,000	470,000	18,500
How much is spent per year to maintain the water source (Shs)	77,622	50,000	14,000	700,000	45,000
Proportion of users that contribute (%)	54	60	8	100	25

Source: ACODE water and roads governance aspects study – 2011 (QSDS)

6.2. Quality of Services at the Water Source

Water sources with designated care takers, which constituted 72 percent of the water sources covered by the ACODE study, were adjudged to be better by users as depicted by the higher levels of satisfaction. This is attributed to roles played by the caretakers; they regulate use of water sources which reduces abuse, they watch over the water source which may reduce vandalism and they also enforce rules on contribution towards maintenance of the water source by restricting

Accountability practices of Water User Commitees



Source: ACODE water and roads governance aspects study

use to those who do not contribute. The outcomes were better in instances where the caretaker is paid. Also, the financial standing was better as relatively more users of water sources with designated caretakers contribute to maintenance. Even the amount of money at hand was greater in instances where there was a caretaker.

What needs to be done?
In order to maintain gains made in provision of clean water especially in rural areas where point water sources are predominant, functionality of water sources has to be improved. It is clear that improving functionality of water sources requires regulation of use of water sources and strengthening maintenance. This can be achieved through the following actions;

1. **There should be caretakers for water sources:** Regulation of use implies having a caretaker at the water source to ensure the water source is not abused. It is also good for collecting contributions for maintenance of water sources. Where financial incentives for the care taker cannot be afforded, exemption from contribution to maintenance could be used to motivate the caretakers.
2. **Increased funding for maintenance of water sources for poverty stricken areas:** The level of poverty should be explicitly considered in the allocation of funds for water to districts by the central government. This would aid communities that are not able to raise money for maintenance and small repairs to their water sources. There is also need to increase the share going to districts beyond the meagre 24 percent.
3. **Greater accountability by WUCs:** The water sector is renowned for having good bureaucratic reporting mechanisms. However, a closer look at the sector shows that supervision and reporting at sub-district levels remains poor. The accountability practices of WUCs are poor which may cause users to withhold their contributions to maintenance in protest or out of mistrust. There needs to be records of water users, contributions by members and how the contributions are utilized.

   It is also noted here as elsewhere malfunctioning of the LCI which is supposed to be the primary forum for consultation and decision making at village level is stifling accountability at that level. The malfunctioning of the LCI is due to the fact that no elections have been held for over ten years due to a court decision in which LCI were ruled un-constitutional. This hurdle appears to have been cleared but elections have not been held reportedly due to lack of funds. The matter of LCI elections ought to be treated very seriously as they are a very important service delivery.
4. **More sensitization of communities on their role in water provision:** There is need to continuously remind citizens that it is their responsibility to contribute to maintenance of water sources by the Community Development Office, Religious Leaders during religious ceremonies and politicians. It appears there are widely held misconceptions that discourage people from contributing to maintenance of water sources e.g government is responsible for provision and maintenance of water sources.
5. **Greater support to WUCs:** The WUCs need greater support from the district water and community development offices especially in areas of sensitization of the communities, training, orientation and guidance to WUCs.

For more information please see full study report at http://www.acode-u.org/documents/PRS_59.pdf

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About ACODE and CBTIC

The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank registered in Uganda with operations in the Eastern and Southern Africa sub-region. Our mission is to make public policies work for people. Through our work, we empower citizens to demand for justice and promote public participation in the decision making processes that affect livelihoods and the environment. ACODE has become the premier organization that facilitates policy dialogue and debate on emerging and cutting edge public policy issues.

The Citizens' Budget Tracking and Information Centre (CBTIC) is one of ACODE's premier initiatives that seek to put control of public expenditure and the budget in the hands of citizens. The goal of the Centre is" to increase accountability and transparency in the allocation and utilization of both local revenue and donor funds by raising citizens' awareness.'' Funding for the CBTIC is provided by The Netherlands Embassy, Kampala, the Hewlett Foundation and the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) through core funding.