

Assessing the support of transition management to governance of WASH services in Kampala's urban informal settlements

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Abstract

Uganda's capital city Kampala is a fast growing urbanity, faced with increasing informal settlements attributed to growing population driven by rural urban migration. Despite the rapid growing urbanisation of Kampala, its informal settlements continue to suffer poor access to basic services like water, sanitation and waste management. Poor access to these basic services has been attributed to low incomes, insecure tenure, low literacy levels, difficult landscape transient, populations, poor governance, poor management, policy and regulatory frameworks to mention but few. Grassroots decision making centres are not recognized by the formal structures of water, sanitation and waste management, creating a disconnect between water policy and water users and bringing into question, the inclusiveness and participatory nature of the process of water, sanitation and waste management policy formulation. To explore and obtain an understanding of the issues at grassroots level, T-Group Uganda designed a research and intervention project that worked with the population to investigate and work on issues affecting quality of water, sanitation and waste disposal mechanisms in informal settings of Kampala city, specifically Kawempe division. The study was founded in applied research and a qualitative approach was adopted to observe and capture resident's impression of water management in the community. A public policy dialogue was organised at Uganda Management Institute through the Uganda Policy Development and Management Forum to validate T-Group's findings and policy recommendations informed by their research and interventions. The research indicated that the social, technical, political and economic changes were needed to sustainably improve management, quality and utilization of WASH services for residents of urban informal settlements in Kampala.

This investigation calls for revision of the contemporary policy framework to: recognize and regulate informal actors in management of water, sanitation and waste disposal in informal urban settings; identify and utilize socialization processes in community to introduce new behavior; reorient technical personnel to effectively interact with users of WASH services and make water, sanitation and waste disposal services affordable to urban poor populations.

Key Words: Transition Management, Sustainability, Policy Framework, WASH services, Urban Informal Settlements

Introduction

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda is experiencing high population growth in its peripheries resulting in an undocumented burden on resources for development of water, sanitation and waste disposal services especially in areas hitherto not gazetted for human settlement and now regarded as urban informal settlements. Faced with increasing urban informal settlements attributed to growing urbanization and rural urban migration. The high population growth in Kampala city is not surprising considering that Uganda has over the years maintained an

average of 3.2% population growth rate, considered one of the highest rates globally. The high informal urban population growth rate has implications that require policy makers to address to improve quality of life in informal urban settings.

Poor access and management of WASH services has been attributed to other reasons as well, like; weak or conflicting governance arrangements that create inertia within the provision structure, lack of formal tenure arrangements and a transient population cited in (Keefe, Lüthi, Kamara, & Tobias, 2015), poor resources management, corruption, inadequate planning, low citizen engagement; population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, climate change; social and cultural factors like local power structures, religion and political attachments (Silvestri et al., 2018).

Though access to water, sanitation and waste management in some SSA urban settings like Kampala had been reported to have slightly improved, research studies indicate that inaccessibility of WASH services to urban poor populations remains common. During their investigations in the Lubigi catchment area Nastar, Isoke, Kulabako, & Silvestri (2019) argue that increase in number of water points did not guarantee improved access to water and sanitation, rather access to basic WASH services such as those hinged on tenure and politics between different units of administration and management.

WASH Services in Urban Informal Settlements in Kampala

The phenomenon of poor access to WASH services in urban slums in SSA has been linked to prevailing top-down management approaches in spatial planning owing to the neo-liberal “pro-poor” reforms with little tangible impact on the quality of life for the urban poor (Goodfellow and Titeca 2012; Gore and Muwanga 2014; Guma 2016; Lambright 2014; Narsiah 2010; Pieterse 2011; Nastar et al., 2019). Some of the neo-liberal “pro-poor” reforms cited as quantitative measures to improved access to water, sanitation and waste management include; use of tools (Murungi & Blokland, 2016), appropriate technologies (Isoke & Van Dijk, 2014; Katukiza et al., 2010) and cost recovery mechanisms (Van Dijk & Oduro-Kwarteng, 2007).

In their assessment of tools used by Uganda’s National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Murungi & Blockland (2016) acknowledge the commendable effort to increase the number of water and sanitation facilities in Kampala’s urban poor informal settlements and note that the effort is challenged by divergent interests between the urban pro-poor branch and other commercial branches, limitations in identifying the poor, high capital and recurrent costs of prepaid water meters and poor management of communal sanitation facilities.

Such policies have always been seen to project access to WASH services as more of an economic good and less of a human right aimed at improving welfare of the end beneficiaries. Richmond, Myers & Namuli (2018) went ahead to argue that in order to improve urban planning through provision of basic services such as WASH services for the vulnerable urban poor informal settlers, there is need to shift from such top down approaches and consider more bottom up approaches that take into account the uniqueness and requirements of individual communities.

Poor access to basic WASH services has also been linked to failure by urban planning authorities to deal with housing supply deficit in form of planned affordable housing community infrastructure. This has subsequently led to massive unplanned, unregulated informal settlement and encroachment of wetlands by the poor because of the perceived cheap accommodation fares synonymous with such environments. This has complicated installation and provision of basic services by service providers attributed to related physical and technical challenges (Katukiza et al., 2010).

Inappropriate financial policies (Murungi & Blokland, 2016), weak policy implementation framework and governance related challenges like limited political support (WaterAid, 2008), are some of the other challenges to access to WASH services in Kampala's urban informal settlements.

Access to sustainable management of basic services such as WASH services has been attributed to cultural beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, reduction of inequalities and involvement of end users (Asutifi North District, 2018; Armah et al., 2018). This approach has been recommended for consideration and embraced by government, international organisations, CSOs and research institutions, to realise sustainable delivery of WASH services. The dialectic position of access to water as a human right and an economic good is considered one of the key reasons for poor access to WASH services by the urban poor populations due to inability to pay the high charges and absence of subsidies or exemption from payment.

Van Dijk & Oduro-Kwarteng (2007) underscore the importance of appropriate policy, context and regulation through price regulation, service quality regulation and access to information regulations through coordination of the multiple actors in the different administrative units of local governments and urban managers in a participatory and inclusive manner. However the implementation of such recommendations may still be far from being realised due to governance gaps between urban informal settlements, administrative units and key urban decision making centres like Kampala.

Manga, Forton, & Read (2008) and UNICEF (2016) have suggested the following to address some of the mentioned challenges above;

- a) Public education and awareness related to neighbourhood services and issues must be increased. However, while the civil society can take an active role in awareness raising campaigns, ultimate success would depend on the full backing of the key-decision makers so that the stakeholders would feel ownership of the project outcomes (Ball, 2006; Wilson et al., 2005; Olley et al., 2006).
- b) Strengthening of private–public partnerships in waste management requires participatory consultation through facilitated workshops involving all key stakeholders like municipal councillors, government agencies, waste contractors and representatives of community groups to cover perspectives and build consensus on how sustainable waste management can be developed and policies and services implemented (Wilson et al., 2005; Henry et al., 2006).
- c) A regulatory function, which establishes mechanisms for control and oversight of these inter-relationships and supports the fulfilment of agreed roles and responsibilities.

In general, regulation protects consumers' rights and promotes good governance for service delivery improvement.

Lack of clarity and awareness about the policies, regulations that govern the management of water, sanitation and waste management at the local level, continues to stifle the accessibility to these basic services as demonstrated by Nastar et al. (2019). NAPE (2012) analysed and reviewed the weaknesses of the existing Ugandan related WASH policy framework at the time and concluded by suggesting the following policy amendments;

- a) Increase deliberate awareness programs about policies, laws and their enforcement mechanisms.
- b) Indicate when government should periodically print, publish and disseminate Water Policies and Laws and WASH related information to all stakeholders in the major local languages.
- c) Clearly indicate mechanisms in the policy that empower water users to demand for information and accountability from service providers and local leaders.
- d) Include in the policy/ water act, a section that empowers Water Users Associations in to work with the village local councils to determine and set context-specific prices for water at community level.
- e) There is a need to review the penalty stated in section 57 of the public health Act and set new fines sensitive to current value of currency and jail sentences commensurate with the offences and currency points. There is also need to put in place a national sanitation policy.

Despite the effort to suggest recommendations as highlighted, there is hardly evidence of effort to ensure organised access to affordable basic services for the urban poor informal settlers.

Tukahirwa, Mol, & Oosterveer (2013) and UN Water (2015) argue that to attain the water-related goal /targets set by the SDG 6, a number of governance gaps related to specific service policy design, regulation and implementation promoted through appreciating the roles and engaging different stakeholders at different levels from information to partnerships or co-decision making according to the needs.

Despite the various policy and governance measures proposed by various scholars, CSOs, government and international agencies, access to WASH services in SSA urban informal settlements like Kampala, is still a challenge attributed to governance and implementation of policy.

The above factors have also been observed and reported by Dos Santos et al., (2017) and Armah et al., (2018) to be responsible for the continued poor access to WASH services and these suggested interdisciplinary alternatives to centralized policy intervention mechanisms that could achieve access to sustainable WASH services.

Objectives

This paper aims to:

- a) Identify policy positions for improvement of governance capacity for local authorities (LCs) in areas where water infrastructure has been established
- b) Identify avenues for resource mobilisation for sustenance of infrastructure and water management systems in communities where water infrastructure is established
- c) Support local authorities with information to replicate and operationalize approaches and policy recommendations accrued from this study

The paper is therefore structured around three research questions outlined as;

- a) What better position can policy makers invest in engaging and sensitising poor urban informal communities to collectively ensure sustainable provision of organised basic WASH services?
- b) What resources are needed to sustain infrastructure and water management systems in communities where basic water infrastructure has been established?
- c) How can the role of the local leadership be enhanced in the water management structure to replicate and operationalize T-Group's approaches and recommendations and improve access to sustainable and affordable WASH services?

Methodology

The T-Group used community based interventions to engage the community and obtain a deep understanding of roles, power dynamics and economics around designated and undocumented water sources in the community. Through participant observation, the T-Group team was able to identify actors in the community trusted with collection of information for scientific analysis. Data collection entailed informal conversations, mapping of water sources, observation of the water source management system including the decision making process. T-Group therefore immersed their teams into the community to observe and offer services like renovation of water sources, formation of grassroots teams to manage the water sources, training of local personnel in basic water source management.

T-Group combined research with intervention in form of projects to improve quality of water and management of water sources. This entailed problem identification, experimentation and strategizing for sustainability of mechanisms for delivery of water, sanitation and waste disposal that were considered effective and functional.

T-Group's findings were validated by an interactive public policy dialogue held at Uganda Management Institute on March 18, 2020 and attended by policy makers, technocrats, academia and members of the community where T-Group operated and members of the general public.

Findings

Processes for policy formulation: the public policy dialogue

The Public Policy Dialogue at Uganda Management Institute is a quarterly half-day activity hosted by the Ugandan Policy Development and Management Forum (UPDMF) regularly attended by the Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Uganda, policy making organs, Civil Society Organizations, academia, political heads of sectors (Ministers), technocrats and the general public. The Forum invites researchers from academia and service oriented organizations to present research findings for input and Policy consideration. The output of the dialogue is a Policy Brief, submitted to cabinet secretariat for consideration after input of the audience at the dialogue. Notably, the cabinet secretariat is part of the steering committee of the UPDMF. This makes the forum strategic for researchers to have their ideas received at a high level of policy formulation. The public policy dialogue for T-Group was held under the theme “Sustainable mechanisms for management of the transition towards effective water, sanitation and waste management in urban informal settlements in Kampala, Uganda”.

The half-day event was hosted and organized by Uganda Management Institute who also mobilized the participants while T Group Research Project team presented the latest research findings and innovations relating to transition management and involvement of national level actors in grassroots management of water, sanitation and waste disposal in informal settlements of Kampala where they intervened. Members of the community in which the research interventions were conducted attended the dialogue and helped to validate the content presented. The dialogue was considered as a platform for enhancing participatory approaches to promote sustainable access to WASH services by populations living in urban informal settings in Kampala.

The dialogue commenced with presentation of two papers based on T Group’s research experience and community perspectives of the transition management for sustainable access to WASH services in resource constrained urban informal settlements around the Lubigi catchment area. The presentations were followed by plenary session that captured ideas from the general public.

In the discussion, the T-Group team made a case for the transition management as one alternative bottom up, interdisciplinary approach with potential for enhancement of access to WASH services, in urban informal settlements and mobilization of support for policy positions. The transition management concept is based on system and actor analysis, formulating transition arenas which are platforms for convergence of actors to identify problems and their causes, envision the solutions to the identified problems and set an agenda to solve the problems.

In their report during the dialogue, the community representatives led the way in appreciating and owning the project, setting a sense of community ownership from grassroots and establishing a framework for sustainability through community based organizations (CBOs).

Community representatives appreciated T-Group’s contribution to addressing the

persistent WASH challenges. The community representatives held themselves accountable for the poor, unplanned housing construction that complicates access for the technical installation of services like water, sewerage, drainage, piped networks and roads for passage of waste collection trucks.

Notably, community representatives acknowledged that they need to contribute to improvement of access to water, sanitation and waste management by paying affordable negotiated tariffs and not waiting for free services and they came up with policy, rules, regulations and penalty proposals to ensure proper and sustainable management of WASH services in their villages.

During implementation of the T-Group project, community participants were trained to manage water sources and shared their training experiences during monthly community meetings. Community participants who represented their communities were empowered with skills to improve their livelihoods, access WASH services by direct participation like mobilizing their community members to clean up environments, utilize collaboration platforms to interact with potential service providers like KCCA, NWSC and lobby for improvement of services. The community members were trained in leadership, conflict management, proposal writing, financial management, book keeping, recycling of organic waste to fabricate charcoal briquettes, liquid detergent and making disinfectants.

The above initiatives of the transition management approach helped cultivate a spirit of attitude, behavior and mindset change advocated for to bring about the desired changes in access to improved basic services such as WASH services.

Being a study intervention and considering that the T Group research project was closing after five years of deep immersion in the community, there was need for advocacy towards accessing and managing the WASH services in a sustainable manner to maintain and potentially replicate achievements made under the project. The public policy dialogue held at UMI was a stage in the process to engrave the study recommendations into government policy framework.

During the dialogue, participants were divided into two groups to discuss the presentations guided by the study objectives and came up with four major policy recommendations for sustainable access to WASH services in urban informal settlements of Kampala.

Policy suggestions to improve governance capacity for local authorities (LCs) in areas where water infrastructure has been established

- a) Water and environment officers at sub-county level should name and train water and environment committees at the lowest level of leadership that directly communicate their activities and meeting resolutions with sub-county health assistant and city water and environment officer for advice and action.
- b) City councils through legislation should make by-laws to empower leaders at the grassroots who make up the water and environment committees to make decisions and allocate resources for day to day management of water sources.
- c) City water and environment officers should be compelled to conduct periodic capacity

building needs assessment to train and conduct awareness programs for technical staff, political leaders, and members of water and environment committees and general population to achieve critical mass that understands the value of water source management.

Replication of T-Group's community empowerment interventions by government and agencies under the water and environment sector

City water and environment offices should mobilize Local council 1 chairpersons to be involved in the decision making process including signing budgets and managing resources.

- a) The city water and environment office should streamline Monitoring & Evaluation practices to ensure compliance with maintenance standards for water and waste disposal facilities
- b) Local councils should promote community participation locally known as bulungi bwansi for the good of the environment.
- c) City water and environment offices should train Local council 1 authorities and avail them with assessment tools to monitor the functionality of water sources and waste disposal facilities in informal urban settings.

Operationalization of laws and regulations for water and waste disposal facilities at grass root level

- a) City water and environment offices should educate and empower communities to demand for service
- b) City authorities should work towards strengthening the water department in the local government up to grassroots level
- c) City authorities should strengthen by-laws in the local government to manage water resources and waste disposal facilities
- d) City authorities should ensure that decisions are made by water and environment committees rather than political actors so that users are not limited by political inclination
- e) City water and environment offices should engage all stakeholders in the communities to ensure ownership and sustainability of water sources
- f) The city water and environment offices should ensure sensitisation of communities on existing laws regarding water sources
- g) The city water and environment offices should ensure consistency and fairness in law enforcement
- h) Technocrats and politicians in the sectors should revise the water and environment sector policy framework to incorporate grassroots water and environment committees
- i) The water and environment sector should ensure that local governments to participate in world water day and use this as an opportunity to create public awareness
- j) Government agencies at all levels should collaborate to ensure functionality of water

and environment committees in informal urban settlements.

Through the T-Group Transition Management approach, the above initiatives were able to be established to demonstrate the need for coordination, consensus on clarity of roles and responsibilities and proper administrative planning for efficient and effective management (Manga et al., 2008).

Resource mobilisation to sustain the infrastructure and water management system in communities where water infrastructure has been established

Government and non-government agencies including international NGOs, local CBOs, government agencies like MWE, NEMA, NWSC, KCCA, local governments, faith based institutions, profitable corporate bodies like MTN, Airtel, Banks and other SMEs may collect and distribute resources for WASH services in urban informal settings by;

- a) Allocating fixed percentage of the 25% Local council tax return to water source management.
- b) Using by-laws to compel NGOs working in informal urban settings to contribute infrastructure and bare minimum of funds to maintain or upgrade water sources.
- c) Introducing cost sharing for users to contribute a minimum fee for maintenance of the water sources and waste disposal systems
- d) Establishing links with water and environment committees at village levels to conduct Corporate Social Responsibility activities like marathons, community visits, upgrade of water sources among others
- e) Mobilising resources through faith based institutions

Limitations of the Public Policy Dialogue on

The Public Policy Dialogue had been one of the most anticipated platforms to further collaboration of the different stakeholders in the WASH sector to promote the discussion on sustainable access to WASH services in urban informal settlements. However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, a number of stakeholders did not attend and limited a number of possible ideas and support on how governance and policy framework could be comprehensively reviewed and effectively implemented.

Conclusions

Management of WASH services remains a challenge to Kampala's informal settlements. Although there is evidence of a functional policy framework, gaps still exist in its operationalization, acceptability by local council authorities, and its utility in management of water sources in informal urban settings. Further engagement with stakeholders is required to lobby for policy review and uptake of recommendations made in this paper to improve quality of water and waste disposal facilities in Kampala city's informal settings.

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