WSUP
Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor

TOPIC BRIEF

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Recognising and dealing with informal influences in water and sanitation services delivery

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Donor-funded water and sanitation improvement programmes tend to focus on and operate within the formal frameworks put in place by municipal or national governments. These frameworks broadly comprise the rules, laws and official policies that govern water and sanitation services delivery. However, in order to plan and implement programmes effectively, it is essential that implementers also recognise and take into account the influence of more subtle *informal factors*, such as conventions, norms of behaviour, and unwritten cultural codes of conduct. This Topic Brief draws on WSUP's experience in the 6-city African Cities for the Future (ACF) programme, to illustrate how both formal and informal factors can influence local service provider and low-income consumer behaviours. The Topic Brief also provides practical guidance aimed at sector programme managers to help explore and respond to some of the issues raised here, with a view to achieving greater project sustainability.

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, programmes in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector have increasingly focused on the development of institutional capacity, alongside the construction of physical infrastructure. In line with this, WSUP's key premise is to strengthen the capacity of local service providers (LSPs; see Box 1) and others to provide sustainable water and sanitation services in low-income urban communities, and in this context institutional development is both complex and necessary. Interventions of this type can include:

- Helping to develop the capacity of LSPs, including strengthening their technical, financial and administrative systems in respect to both general operations and pro-poor service delivery
- Supporting community participation and community-managed models of service delivery
- Supporting and advocating for development of an enabling environment, with appropriate policy and legal frameworks

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The effectiveness of these interventions is influenced not only by the *formal* rules (constitutions, laws and regulations, political systems, etc.) that govern the behaviour of stakeholders, but also by *informal* constraints (value systems, beliefs, social norms, customs, traditions, codes of conduct, etc.).

The formal frameworks put in place by the State attempt to manage the often-political competition for use of resources. They reflect negotiations and decisions relating to State objectives, which entail, for example, growing the economy and supporting industry, and meeting the needs of certain demographic groups. In the context of WASH delivery a number of assumptions are often made in relation to market behaviour and State influences on that behaviour. For example:

- That the consumer-provider relationship and the economic market principle (that supply and demand set prices) can be relied upon;
- That the consumer has a "voice" and can provoke change by expressing (dis) satisfaction with service delivery in the consumer-institution relationship;
- That regulating the practices of small-scale independent providers[1] (SIPs) will encourage them to meet market demand.

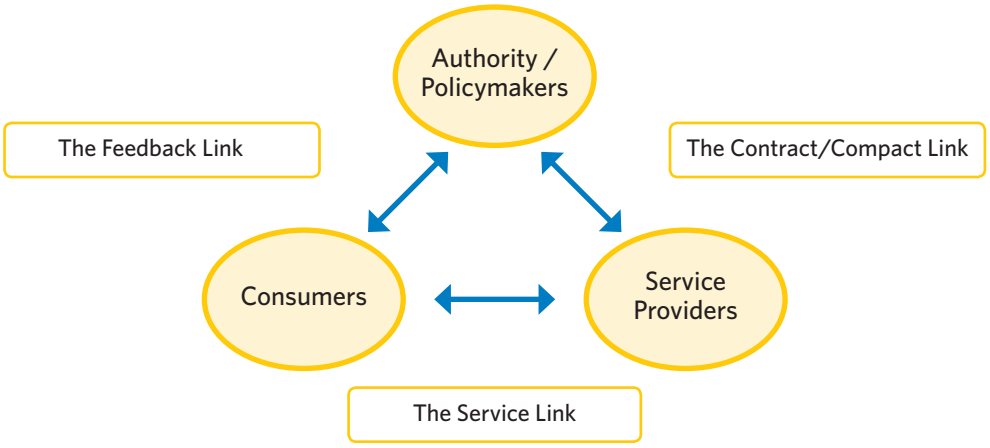
However, these assumptions tend not to take informal influencing factors into account: for example, social rules within a community that are not linked to affordability, and that may affect consumer preferences for a service.

Figure 1 below illustrates the over-arching conceptual model on which this Topic Brief is based. It depicts the different relationships between stakeholders: WASH authorities and policy makers (who set the rules), service providers (who, at least in theory, operate within the rules) and consumers (who may or may not have the means to make demands on the system).

Each of the sets of stakeholders indicated in Figure 1 operates within their own formal framework; but they are also influenced by a number of informal factors that affect their individual and organisational behaviours and decisions "behind the scenes".

Figure 1: Simplified Stakeholder Framework*

Adapted from the World Development Report 2004



This Topic Brief draws on stakeholder analyses undertaken in the six cities of the WSUP-implemented African Cities for the Future (ACF) programme, to present learning that can be applied across the sector. It examines both the *formal frameworks* that projects operate within, and the *informal factors* that have been found to influence them, at both country and city level. It then outlines the challenges that can result from informal influences on project implementation. Finally, it presents *practical guidance* on how to take these informal factors into account in the planning and implementation of WASH interventions.

[1] Small independent providers may be formalised organisations and businesses, or basically unregulated informal providers. They include: independent private water operators ranging from mobile vendors to kiosk operators; suppliers of sanitation products and services including pit emptiers; community-based organisations (CBOs); and Water Trusts and User Associations. "Informal" certainly does not mean "bad": informal service providers, even if unregulated, can often play extremely valuable and important roles in low-income contexts not reached by formal service provision systems. Intelligent regulation may often be of value, but most importantly governments and implementing agencies need to assess how best to harness the positive aspects of the informal sector, minimise the negative aspects, and look for genuinely effective ways of creating effective links between the formal and the informal.

> “Project outcomes can vary according to subtle informal factors”

2. Background: the ACF programme

The African Cities for the Future (ACF) programme, running over the period 2009–2012, is funded by USAID and implemented by Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP). The aim of the programme is to demonstrate approaches for improving WASH services to poor urban communities that are scalable, sustainable, and financially viable, and that mobilise additional investment. The programme operates in six cities: Antananarivo (Madagascar), Bamako (Mali), Kumasi (Ghana), Maputo (Mozambique), Nairobi (Kenya), and Naivasha (Kenya). In line with WSUP's wider strategy, the programme aims to increase equitable access to WASH for low-income urban communities, predominantly by supporting key actors and improving interactions between them. Relevant actors here range from self-employed independent operators right up to the utility and the municipal government.

WSUP's approach and choice of model for each country and city is flexible and context-specific (see below for an overview of the ACF programme in each city). However, all six programmes tend to operate within structured formal frameworks:

- At a central level: seeking to reduce costs and tariffs, increasing investments in poor areas, formalising the mandate of key stakeholders, removing legal barriers and strengthening policy to improve access;
- At a local level: incentivising LSPs to serve low-income communities and households, formalising their services through contractual arrangements, and providing them with training;
- Improving inter-sector interactions: seeking to set up ownership, management and operating models between utilities and SIPs.

A key learning from WSUP's work under the ACF programme is that project outcomes can vary according not only to their formal context, but also to more subtle informal factors. Such factors might include the ability of a utility or municipal authority to incentivise providers and bring stakeholders together to negotiate; or social factors that affect discussions on tariff, technology choice, consumer focus and financing issues.

Box 1: WSUP definition of Local Service Providers (LSPs)

- Water Utilities
- Municipal Service Authorities
- Small Independent Providers (SIPs):
  - Independent private water operators
  - Suppliers of sanitation products and services
  - Community Based Organisations (CBOs)
  - Water Trusts & User Associations

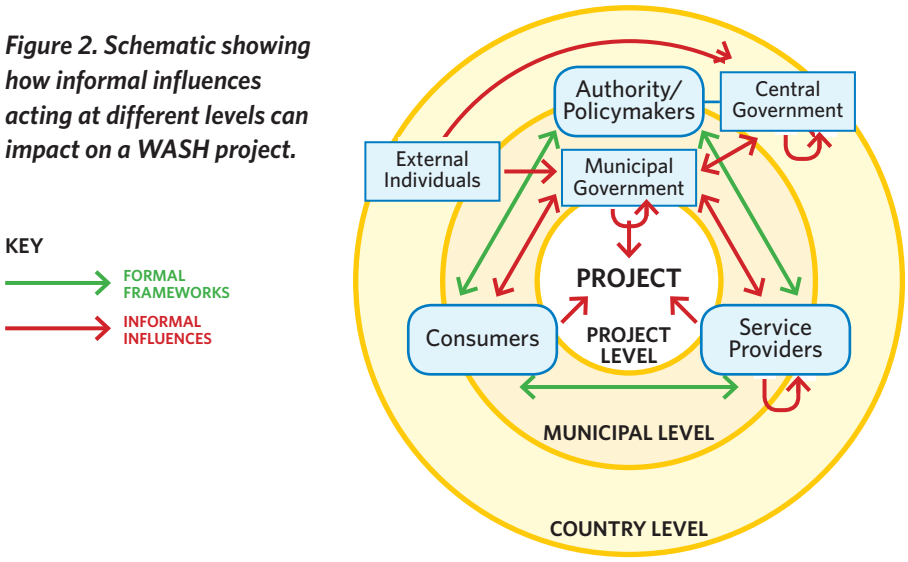
Table 1. Overview of WSUP interventions in the six ACF cities.

Location	Overview of WSUP interventions
Antananarivo (Madagascar)	The ACF programme has supported the expansion of pro-poor services within a number of peri-urban areas and neighbourhoods in the city. WSUP works with the water utility and municipality to increase the number of water facilities to improve access, and to reduce non-revenue water (NRW) to improve water availability for public facilities. It supports a community-based management model to help promote a sense of community ownership, and builds capacity at city and sub-district levels to improve the supervision of facilities under community management.
Bamako (Mali)	Responsibility for ensuring adequate water and sanitation services has been decentralised to each Commune of Bamako. Together with WaterAid, WSUP has assisted the Communes to create Water & Sanitation Technical Units, and has also provided capacity development support to both the Communes and the water utility to help strengthen their ability to work in partnership. The ACF programme has also supported the Communes to construct water kiosks, in an attempt to improve the quality of service available to consumers in low-income areas of the city, and has worked to strengthen the links between the Communes and small independent providers who operate the kiosks.
Kumasi (Ghana)	The ACF programme has supported Ghana Urban Water Company (GUWC) to model a range of possible water-delivery mechanisms for low-income areas, and has constructed a decentralised water network in a peri-urban community. There has also been a focus on trialling different sanitation options, and on improving the quality of service available at public toilet blocks. The location of all 380+ public toilets in the city has been mapped, and an investment model is being developed to maximise private-sector investment in the rehabilitation and operation of public toilet blocks. The programme has also developed a management model for public facilities that ensures a significant and effective role for community-based organisations while keeping overall responsibility for the asset with the appropriate authority.
Maputo (Mozambique)	The ACF programme has provided capacity building for local suppliers on various aspects of WASH services, such as construction and latrine-emptying. A new community-based management model for communal latrine blocks has been developed, which includes facilitating the start-up of Community Management Committees responsible for operation and management. The programme has also demonstrated how "Sanitation and Hygiene Clubs" can improve health outcomes by including the local community in school councils. WSUP is promoting a long-term perspective to sanitation by supporting city officials to draft a City-Wide Sanitation Plan, which has encouraged very positive discussions about mandates, operation and maintenance.
Nairobi (Kenya)	WSUP has worked with LSPs to help them expand services in four informal settlements. It provides capacity development support to the city water utility, particularly in relation to their approach to informal settlements: for example, by focusing on reducing NRW and experimenting with novel low-cost sewerage approaches (including sewered public toilets that double as sewered sludge-tipping points). WSUP has also provided training on the operation and maintenance of community WASH facilities, as well as being involved in a hygiene promotion campaign. WSUP also supports the interaction between the central authority and a forum of agencies working in informal settlements, to receive and respond to consumer feedback.
Naivasha (Kenya)	WSUP has built a delegated management water-delivery model that provides a legally structured relationship between the water utility, SIPs, the community-level Water User Associations (WUAs) and the regulator. WSUP has also provided the utility with capacity development support. To increase overall water supply, WSUP has assisted formal borehole operators in securing loans for investment and business expansion. Compound-level communal sanitation facilities are being constructed, as well as hand-washing facilities. WSUP is also working with the national regulator to adapt its mandate to better benefit poor communities.

3. Formal and informal influences: Country-level perspective

In order to gain an understanding of the full range of factors (informal and formal) that may affect the outcome of a given WASH project or programme, it is useful to start by looking at contextual influences acting at the *country* level. The diagram below builds on Figure 1 to illustrate how informal influences acting at different levels (country, municipal) can impact a WASH project trying to operate within the formal frameworks in place between stakeholders.

Figure 2. Schematic showing how informal influences acting at different levels can impact on a WASH project.



The Institutional Profiles Database 2009 (IPD 2009)[2] contains 367 indicators for a wide range of institutional characteristics for over 100 countries. It is based on a 2009 survey of experts' opinions on the relationship between formal and informal factors in each country examined, and the relative importance of each type of influence.

By way of example, information from the IPD database is shown in Table 2 below for each of the ACF countries. The table reveals some interesting patterns, which are discussed below in Sections 3.1 through 3.3.

[2] Source: Institutional Profiles Database (2009) *www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/Schools/MGSoG/ProjectPages/InstitutionalProfilesDatabase.htm*

Table 2. Interplay between formal frameworks and informal constraints within ACF countries (summarised from IPD database 2009). Darker colours indicate stronger negative impact of informal influences in that area.

	Ghana	Kenya	Madagascar	Mali	Mozambique
Informal influences over policy at government level					
Do informal institutions parallel to government have significant improper impact on the country's political conduct? *(1-strong impact; 4-weak)*	3	3	2	2	2
Are rights respected in the administration-citizens relationship? *(1-weak respect; 4-strong)*	3	1	2	1	2
Does political power have authority over the administration? *(1-weak authority; 4-strong)*	3	3	3	2	3
Are municipalities making autonomous decisions on basic service delivery? *(1-weak autonomy; 4-strong)*	2	2	2	1	1
Institutional pro-poorness (from the government or other public or private institutions)					
Are there transfer mechanisms towards poor people? *(1-weak transfer; 4-high)*	3	1	1	1	2
Is the revenue sharing[3] theme an ongoing public debate? *(1-little debate; 4-strong)*	4	3	4	1	3
Is there ethnic or caste-based segregation? *(1-strong segregation; 4-weak)*	2	1	2	2	3
Government's enforcement capacity and obstacles					
Is government action guided by a long-term strategic vision? *(1-poor strategic vision; 4-strong)*	2	2	3	2	3
Does government have capacity to motivate stakeholders to work towards vision? *(1-poor capacity; 4-high)*	3	2	2	1	2
Public authorities' capacity to define public policy: is this hindered by internal political opposition? *(1-strongly hindered; 4-barely)*	4	2	2	1	2
Is it hindered by discord between economic, regional or other entities? *(1-strongly hindered; 4-barely)*	4	3	2	3	2

Adapted from IPD (2009). Wording of the indicators has been somewhat modified for clarity. We stress that these are IPD assessments and not WSUP assessments.

In what follows we discuss some of the country-level informal influences seen in the ACF programme countries, based on the IPD assessments.

3.1. Informal influences over policy at government level

A key goal of many sector programmes is to work with governments to create an appropriate enabling environment for WASH delivery. Understanding the informal influences that may affect government policy will help project planning in this area.

- Informal institutions have more influence over legal institutions, such as political parties, in Madagascar, Mali and Mozambique than in Kenya and Ghana. In other words, political decisions are less respected and more open to informal influence in Madagascar, Mali and Mozambique.
- The Ghanaian administration appears the most respectful of the rights of citizens, and therefore most likely to submit to public demands for certain services, with the Mali and Kenyan administrations ranking last for this indicator.
- There is a perceived low level of autonomy for municipalities on basic services delivery in all countries, suggesting strong central government influence over city-level decision-making.

[3] Revenue sharing (technical term "repartition") relates to the extent to which national government passes tax revenues down to lower levels of government, e.g. municipalities.

Influences on government policy: how does this affect project planning?

- Given the low municipality autonomy in all countries, it may be more important to try and attain buy-in from stakeholders within central administration levels from the project outset.
- Encouraging poor consumer voice initiatives may be more effective in some countries than in others, where support may need to be more carefully targeted.

3.2. Institutional pro-poorness

The capacity of the State and other public and private institutions to work collectively for socio-economic security and social justice gives an indication of how pro-poor WASH interventions may be received in a country.

- Although there are strong public debates on revenue sharing in Kenya and Madagascar, this does not widely translate into pro-poor policies, including mechanisms for resource transfer to low-income people. However, both public debates and transfer mechanisms are active in Ghana, indicating that informal influences in the form of societal pressure have had an impact on pro-poor policies. Debates on this issue are markedly absent in Mali, as are transfer mechanisms.
- Marginalisation of vulnerable people can be a result of a variety of factors, such as ethnicity, caste, disability, and political affiliation. These informal factors can work against people's formal entitlements to access services, such as WASH infrastructure. In the view of the experts consulted for the IPD database, such discrimination (although not necessarily impacting on WASH services) is an issue in all countries except Mozambique.

Institutional pro-poorness: how does this affect project planning?

- Issues relating to inequitable access due to discrimination of marginalised groups should be carefully considered and factored in to WASH projects.
- In countries where pro-poor policy is weak, it may be appropriate to invest time at the project outset to consult actors about pro-poor project aims: for example running workshops to lobby/educate on the importance of pro-poor interventions.
- Project goals need to be ambitious but realistic: for example, where institutional pro-poorness is strong and some sort of sanitation tax framework already exists, it may be reasonable to work towards a more pro-poor alignment of that tax *within the project timeframe*; but in less favourable contexts it might make more sense to treat a sanitation tax as a *longer-term* advocacy goal.

3.3. The government's enforcement capacity and obstacles

In the context of WASH programmes it is useful to understand the government's capacity to incentivise public and private actors to support its long-term strategy. This has implications for the likelihood of successful private and public sector investment in WASH services.

- Table 2 above suggests that although there may be a long-term strategic vision in Madagascar and Mozambique, implementation is likely to be delayed as a result of poor incentives for the public and private sector, and political and economic discord.
- In Mali and Kenya, the IPD experts suggest that the government has a relatively weak long-term strategic vision and an inability to incentivise actors. This seems to be further hindered by economic or regional conflicts.

- In Ghana there is a somewhat unique situation where, despite a perceived weak long-term vision, the government manages to incentivise actors effectively, and has fewer economic or political issues than many other similar African countries.

Government mobilising influence: how does this affect project planning?

- In countries where there is a disconnect between policy and implementation, particular support should be given to both the planning and operationalisation stages of WASH delivery, e.g. working with a municipality to produce a city-wide sanitation plan could be supplemented with support to incentivise public and private stakeholders to invest.

4. Formal and informal influences: City-level perspective

The previous section (Section 3) has considered country-level informal factors that may affect the outcome of a given WASH project or programme; this section (Section 4) looks at influences acting at the *municipal* level. Again, specific examples are taken from the analysis of the ACF cities.

At the municipal/city level, the provision of water and sanitation services –including the location, type, capacity and management of any infrastructure– is generally governed by formal rules, though these rules may be more developed in some areas than others (e.g. there are often more rules governing water supply than sanitation). In some cases, a regulatory framework has been put in place by government entities to ensure that utilities and other LSPs comply with these formal rules. Formal rules can also affect the demand for services: for example, by encouraging or preventing certain users from accessing a particular service or source, using incentives or levies. But these formal frameworks may certainly be subject to informal influences: in other words, various informal factors can interfere with the effective working of these formal rules.

The table below focuses on findings from WSUP's ACF programme. It summarises the key municipal-level formal and informal influences on WASH delivery in each of the six cities. It also articulates some of the more specific factors at play at the project level within the programme. Some key findings are as follows:

- Location and management of water supply may be based on informal influences, such as political bargaining, rather than on formal rules. For example, in Bamako there have been reports (difficult to verify) of public standpipes being installed in specific locations in return for community votes.
- Some projects actually rely on informal influences to ensure demand. WASH projects with a community management component tend to place emphasis on an informal sense of community ownership to drive the model. In other cases projects may have to *overcome* community-level informal influences in order to be effective: in Maputo, for example, some consumers may have to informally negotiate access to public water points that they are in fact formally entitled to use.
- Although an intervention may be operating within a formal framework (for example, in line with government policy), it may be hindered or obstructed by informal personal interests. In these cases, project progress can be obstructed. For example, encouraging private sector investment in public toilets in Kumasi may not be in the interests of government officials who are generating personal income from running public toilets.

Table 3. Formal and informal influences acting at the city level: examples from the six ACF cities. Also listed are project-level factors: formal frameworks specific to the ACF project in each city, and informal constraints on these frameworks.

City	Formal frameworks	Informal constraints
Antananarivo (Madagascar)	Management and financing models and tools that structure WASH services (including a sanitation plan and a municipal sanitation tax) exist. Municipality controls overall supply via contracting and offering shared toilets.	Management and financing models/tools are in general weakly developed and poorly implemented, in part because of relatively weak institutions/capacity, budgetary constraints and (over the last 3 years) the uncertain political environment. Some operators are informal, i.e. lie outside the scope of formal arrangements.
Project level	Management relies on basic principles: availability, price incentives, and supply and demand oriented behaviours.	Certain social behaviours may be preventing planned level of use, e.g. personal acquisition of community-owned infrastructures.
Bamako (Mali)	Formal rules govern water supply and regulation. Communes are entitled to authorise installation of water standpipes in agreement with the national utility. Local government has no mandate to control national utility prices or network locations.	Relationships between the national utility and the municipality are reported to be tense due to poor payment compliance on the part of the municipality. This has led in practice to decentralisation of management responsibility to individuals. The Quartier chiefs[4] act as the political relay to Communes on government policy. Political bargaining reported to occur: i.e. trading installation of public standpipes for community votes.
Project level	Interventions are based on economic incentives for new standpipe managers and for their customers.	Quartier chiefs may complicate this arrangement by their political involvement in the delivery of WASH services to communities.
Kumasi (Ghana)	Departments within the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly manage the supply of sanitation services by: - Establishing hygiene norms and standards for housing construction; - Implementing municipal and national sanitation plans at the municipal level; - Enforcing regulation regarding price for use, land allocation, ownership, and management of public toilets, via various departments of the KMA.[5]	Political factors and weak capacity minimise the scope for implementation of technical and hygiene standards. For example, enforcement may be difficult as those with overall responsibility for enforcement (Assembly Members) may in some cases have a vested interest not to comply. The less revenue that is spent on maintaining and improving facilities, the more some Assembly Members can personally profit from the system.[6]
Project level	Includes encouraging private sector investment in public toilets	Encouraging landlords to build individual toilets would reduce the market for public toilets, thus reducing revenue for sub-district, local government and Assembly Members.
Maputo (Mozambique)	Formal rules (e.g. The Water Code, the National Programme for Water and Sanitation, and sector policies) determine levels of government responsibility, and supervision and management models for WASH.	Political interference may be biasing the water utility in its responses to demands for connections. AdeM is struggling to achieve the targets set by FIPAG of 30,000 connections per year; in the case of sanitation, institutional weaknesses and unclear mandates are significant obstacles.
Project level	Introduction of water pricing for water supplied from community-owned infrastructure.	In some respects, the project relies on informal influences to ensure demand. The assumption is that community managers have a greater ability to foster community acceptance than other public or private models. However, unequal access can be an issue, where some users have to negotiate access to public water points that they are officially entitled to use.
Nairobi & Naivasha (Kenya)	Municipalities are responsible for water sector planning via the Water Act, and regions are responsible for water services delivery. The Water Services Regulatory Board grants licenses to private operators, participates on the utility board, and contributes to pro-poor policy.[7] Water resources management planning councils are responsible for environmental issues in their geographical area in conjunction with the wider environmental authority (WRMA).	Competition for resources between decentralised administrations is interfering with performance. Political influence from the central authority, as well as personal financial interests, can disrupt supply and regulation at the municipal level.
Project level (Nairobi)	Once land tenure and slum recognition issues had been overcome with the authorities, the project's aim was to support localised sanitation options.	Differing opinions can affect project outcomes: for example, the municipal utility's preference was to connect poor dwellings via condominial sewerage.

[4] Position gained through inheritance or election.

[5] For example, guidelines from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development prohibit Assembly Members from managing public toilets, in order to prevent political interference in toilet provision.

[6] It should be stressed that, from the perspective of Assembly Members in Kumasi, the low level of the salary ("sitting allowance") they receive for their role in the community justifies this economic activity. Also, in interviews Assembly Members suggested that, whilst lucrative in some areas, overseeing public toilets does not give them the dignity they would aspire to as elected officials.

[7] Network expansion for the poor, control over prices implemented by independent operators.

5) Challenges arising from informal influences

This section draws on WSUP's experience from the ACF project to describe more generally the challenges that can arise from informal pressures on WASH interventions. It focus on three key types of intervention typically undertaken by WSUP: formalising water services provision by small independent providers; optimising sanitation service provision; and achieving scale-up.

5.1) Formalising water services provision by small independent providers (SIPs)

WSUP is implementing delegated management models[8] in Maputo, Kumasi and Naivasha. These involve putting in place different types of management and contractual arrangement between the different actors in the water supply chain.[9] SIPs who serve low-income and poorly served areas in urban settings tend to have a substantial market share. Improving the effectiveness of a utility's engagement with SIPs has a number of advantages. A major advantage is that the utility can then focus on improving its technical and financial performance, while out-sourcing distribution and customer care to private operators and community-based organisations. For consumers, the advantages are that a better level of service can often be provided: a common situation is for consumers to pay less than they were paying previously to informal standpipe or mobile vendors (though typically more per cubic metre than people served directly by the utility), and to receive substantially better service.[10] As well as the obvious benefits, there are challenges linked to informal influences with this type of intervention. For example:

- *Personal attitudes* – Formalising SIP businesses usually entails the development of clear contractual agreements and appropriate financial incentives between actors, to allow for SIPs to be properly regulated and incentivised. In some cases, government authorities and formal providers may see this as an unwelcome admission of failure in their ability to serve their population adequately. This could lead to a lack of buy-in and obstructive behaviours.
- *Political interests* – Municipality support to improve SIP services in poor communities could result in trade-offs to harness political support (votes), which could affect the services being properly regulated.
- *Social positioning and status* – The social governing rules of a community could have an impact on both the supply and demand side of delegated/community-managed water service provision, for example:
  i. SIPs may not be able to compete with one another on an equal footing, as new entrants to the market could face resistance from consumers. This could be due to loyalty to existing SIPs who may have significant social standing: for example, they may have the ability to fulfil other community needs such as housing, administrative support, employment or credit.
  ii. The governing rules of the community may not encourage equitable WASH access for the poorest and most marginalised people: for example, people may not want to share toilets with people of very low social status or caste.
- *Accountability* – In community-managed models, formal accountability mechanisms for consumers often do not exist (routine service monitoring, grievance mechanisms, etc.). Facilities management and maintenance is often determined essentially by "social regulation" (which requires that the community will want to work together for mutual benefit). This assumption relies on the community's ability to generate a collective sense of ownership. However, a reliance on social regulation can have undesired outcomes. For example:

[8] A business model setting out the institutional architecture between actors for formalising independent service delivery at a local level, including a series of contract agreements that define each actor's role, responsibilities and incentives, and how each actor will work with the others.

[9] See WSUP Topic Brief (Feb 2011) "Business models for delegated management of local water services: experience from Naivasha (Kenya)."

[10] See *www.wsp.org/wsp/sites/wsp.org/files/publications/Afimp_through_delegated_mgmt.pdf*

i. If financial responsibility for WASH is transferred to the community, this may effectively relieve the relevant public institutions (e.g. municipality, utility) of responsibility for poor citizens' needs. If public institutions are not serving the poor, it may be unfair to blame community managers for poor-quality services. [However, it is certainly possible, given properly designed agreements, for day-to-day responsibility to lie at the community level, while asset ownership and long-term maintenance rest with the utility or municipality.]

ii. Consumers are more likely to trust community managers than the municipal authority, meaning that they are more likely to conform to their decisions regarding provision. This may sometimes mean that lower levels of service quality are accepted.

5.2) Optimising sanitation services provision

Under the ACF programme and more generally, WSUP supports development of sanitation services for low-income urban areas that optimally meet the needs of the consumer, both in terms of the type and location of the facility. This aim is often complicated by contextual factors, including both formal and informal land arrangements, and beneficiaries who may be tenants, owner-occupiers or landlords. In the ACF programme, tenure issues of this type have arisen in Nairobi, Antananarivo, Kumasi and Maputo. Examples of informal influences in this area are as follows:

- *Weak incentives for investment*[11] – Low-income settlements often have very complex land tenure arrangements. Land being rented to tenants may have been bought, sub-divided, inherited and sold several times under informal land arrangements, while being officially owned by the state or a private company or individual. Tenure security (or lack of it) can have a significant impact on the ability of projects to achieve their outcomes, in part because it can affect the incentives of the different stakeholders to invest in the infrastructure improvement and upkeep. For example:
  i. In theory, tenants should have strong incentives to invest in improving and maintaining infrastructure that they will use. However, factors such as the transient behaviour of tenants in informal settlements often mean they have limited willingness to invest. For example, in Maputo, some tenants would rather pay a premium for a service than be bound by a contractual arrangement that might limit their independence.
  ii. Landlords are likely to be averse to investing too heavily in infrastructures in informal settlements, in order to "stay under the radar" of the authorities (i.e. to avoid tax, rent control, repossession of land, etc.) In some cases, landlords own local standpipes and toilet facilities, so may have an incentive to obstruct and hinder provision of improved infrastructure that would be in direct competition to their own facilities.
  iii. Government bodies, utilities and donors (e.g. development banks) may likewise often be under a disincentive to invest in infrastructure in informal settlements, because of the legal and social complexity of land tenure issues.
  iv. Conversely, private operators have a good incentive to meet the demand where publicly supported facilities are lacking.
- *Issues relating to social habits and gender-based preferences* – User preferences can affect the usage levels of sanitation infrastructure in unpredicted ways. Box 2 below describes one approach to this issue used in Antananarivo, where the WSUP team has developed a procedure for identifying locations in which demand for shared services will be strong. But in addition to these issues of location and affordability, there may be other informal factors rooted within the community that reduce facility usage. For example:

[11] This paragraph based on Scott P (2011) "Tenure and tenancy", an unpublished BPD report for WSUP.

i. Users may prefer existing behaviours: they may simply prefer open defecation or the use of 'flying toilets'.

ii. Gender-based preferences are also significant in this context. Women's security can be a particular challenge in urban informal settlements, as is often the case in Nairobi:[12] facilities located at a distance from the household can put women at very significant risk of violence. In addition, poor cleanliness, inconvenience and a lack of privacy may all contribute to reduced usage of communal sanitation blocks by women. Many women reportedly prefer to use flying toilets rather than a communal block which is very dirty, or which is at any rate perceived to be dirty/smelly; and lack of privacy may be a common concern, particularly during menstruation or when ill.

Box 2: Experience from Antananarivo

Since 2008, WSUP and CARE have been working in Antananarivo to introduce water kiosks and public toilet/shower blocks in low-income communities.[13] In initial phases of the work, it became apparent that some facilities were being used less than expected. When investigated, there were a number of reasons for low usage including location, affordability, preference for existing behaviours (such as use of unprotected wells or open defecation), and poor signposting. The project implementation team found that it was critical to assess user preferences for type and location of facility on a "micro-level" scale, i.e. within the specific catchment area of a proposed facility, at the planning stage for construction of new infrastructure. In 2010, the team developed a market research-type procedure (the Community Infrastructure Location Assessment tool, CILA) for identifying viable infrastructure locations. Tools such as this present the opportunity to carefully assess all factors –including those less immediately identifiable– that may influence consumer preferences.

- *Issues relating to disagreement among institutional stakeholders* – The WASH delivery structure in poor urban areas is highly complex. Particularly in the sanitation area (less so in water), it typically involves a plethora of government institutions, financing and implementing agencies, international and local NGOs, and CBOs. As a result, there are many competing interests and attitudes at play. This can have a particular impact on design and technology choices. For example, in Kenya there are tensions between the Water Services Trust Fund[14] (WSTF) and a number of NGOs relating to the design of sanitation blocks that should be "standard practice" across the country. It is possible that negotiations relating to design/technology could become more tense in the future.[15]
- *Issues relating to social governance rules* – A key issue to be considered is who will manage a sanitation block once it has been constructed. In some countries, this role has traditionally been taken on by CBOs. However, assumptions should not be made lightly about a community's ability –in terms of social cohesion– to take on such responsibility, and the specific context should be carefully assessed. For example, in Nairobi, some CBO-run blocks have reportedly been captured by 'mafia-type' organisations who practice extortion and appropriate sanitation blocks for their own ends. Another reported problem is 'male capture', where women are pushed out of management committees to the detriment of the wider sanitation objectives of the infrastructure.[16]

[12] Amnesty International (2010) "Insecurity and Indignity: Women's Experiences in the Slums of Nairobi, Kenya."

[13] See WSUP Practice Note 6 "Location is everything: optimal placement of community water and sanitation services." *www.wsup.com/sharing/PracticeNote6.htm*

[14] The WTSF is a body that receives government and donor-derived funds and directs them to the poorest locations in the country.

[15] BPD (2010) "Urban Sanitation – Progress and Prospects. Nairobi, Kenya: An impartial review" (unpublished report for WSUP).

[16] See footnote 14.

5.3) Achieving scale-up

One of WSUP's key aims is to mobilise investment to scale up service delivery models. For example, under the ACF programme WSUP works with LSPs in Nairobi to help them to expand services in four informal settlements. However, service expansion interventions can be constrained by a number of informal influences on the process. For example:

- *Balance of power* – A government incentive for productive engagement with LSPs is successful service expansion, so that the government agency in question can then claim some of the credit. However, this can also result in competition between central and local government agencies each trying to take the credit, particularly in capital cities, which have high political significance. The flip side is also true: one government agency can blame another for an unsuccessful intervention.
- *Accountability* – Linked to the above, unbalanced central government influence at municipal level can result in submission of the municipal authority to central government demands, reducing the municipality's accountability to its constituents. By contrast, if the municipality has real responsibility, it is likely to be more sensitive to local perceptions of its legitimacy: this can positively impact on its role in basic service provision and, hence, project sustainability.
- *Corrupt practices* – Corruption may of course impact on project outcomes in various ways. One potential problem arises when project intervention areas are selected through negotiation with local institutions: a possibility here is that intervention areas and/or precise construction locations may be selected not on the basis of need, but rather in return for financial or political gain.

6) Recommendations for programme managers

This final section, based on the ACF experience detailed in this report, sets out recommendations for programme managers about how to identify and deal with informal influencing factors in WASH project planning and implementation. In parallel with the guidelines, Appendix I offers a simple tool for assessing potential informal influences in a given context.

1) ***Identify potential informal influences*** – It is essential for programme planners and programme managers in the WASH sector to be aware of the specific informal factors that may be present in a particular project context, and to be willing to tackle these issues, even if they may often be sensitive or difficult. As this Topic Brief has discussed, informal factors can have a very significant impact on a project's outputs, and should not be ignored. *The tool included as Appendix 1 should help programme managers to identify the informal influences that may affect their projects.*

2) ***Consult broadly with stakeholders*** – At an early stage in project planning, it is essential to identify and consult with the full range of institutional stakeholders impacted by the project (not just those directly involved in WASH delivery): for example, town planning authorities, education authorities and CSOs. This enables inputs from diverse perspectives, fosters a mutual vision for the project, and encourages collective buy-in. Broad consultation also gives the opportunity to identify and respond to potential issues that could arise from obstructive behaviours later on.

3) ***Incorporate local knowledge*** – Local stakeholder workshops and consultation within communities at the project outset should be used to help i) identify and respond to social codes of conduct, habits and elite practices that may adversely affect a project, and ii) understand the social governing rules within communities targeted by the project, which may or may not favour access to WASH facilities by marginalised groups. The results of workshops and consultations need be *genuinely*

> "The importance of developing relationships with key individuals cannot be over-stressed"

taken into account in project planning. In addition, the project's local staff should be systematically encouraged to incorporate their cultural and local knowledge of these informal factors into project design and implementation.

4) ***Talk to central government*** – In many countries central government has a strong influence over municipal government decision-making and activities, i.e. there is a low level of municipal autonomy. In these cases it is important to place an emphasis on including influential individuals and organisations at a central level in discussions and consultation during project planning, even if they are not expected to be involved directly in the project's implementation.

5) ***Strengthen accountability*** – Improving accountability mechanisms is central to tackling informal influences arising from corruption and politically biased activities in WASH delivery. Clear accountability mechanisms should be developed and communicated with relevant stakeholders from the project outset. Efforts focused at improving accountability can include, for example: i) promoting greater transparency around the actions of WASH sector officials, e.g. by building capacity within water utilities to improve corporate governance and internal procedures, such as contract management; ii) encouraging the publicising of utility accounts, budgets, contracting arrangements, annual reports, etc.; iii) educating consumers about the role they can play in monitoring provider performance and preventing corruption; and iv) creating an ongoing forum of dialogue (and collaboration) between public authorities, LSPs and consumers.

6) ***Encourage poor consumer voice*** – It may be appropriate to use advocacy measures (direct or indirect depending on the context) to encourage consumers to demand their rights. This is particularly important in countries where civil society does not have a strong voice, and public debate around pro-poor service delivery and equitable access is lacking. Examples of activities include: i) encouraging local NGOs and CSOs to have more input into informing policy; ii) focusing on developing relationships with key individuals within partner organisations, such as a utility, to help support internal advocacy at the municipal level for pro-poor initiatives; and iii) supporting consumer voice initiatives. The importance of developing relationships with key individuals within partner organisations cannot be over-stressed: in WSUP's experience under the ACF programme and more generally, such relationships are absolutely critical to project success.

7) ***Harmonise approaches*** – Difference of opinion is a subtle but key influence on project outcomes, and it is often not directly linked to formal rules and frameworks. This can be partly addressed in the short term by broad stakeholder consultation as recommended above. However, in order to achieve long-term project sustainability in a sector that is highly complex and fragmented, it is essential that programme managers from different backgrounds and countries coordinate with one another. There is a need for project implementing agencies to work closely with all other relevant stakeholders operating in a given locality, with the aim of harmonising planning of WASH services delivery.

To sum up: over the past decade, programmes in the water and sanitation sector have moved beyond physical construction, and now typically encompass a range of interventions including "softer" components, such as capacity development, institutional influence and community education. But all interventions, whether "hard" and "soft", have tended to be conceived and designed within the formal frameworks (economic, legal, political) of the city or country in question.

It is *essential* to move one step further, and to recognise that project outcomes cannot necessarily be achieved within the formal "rules of the game". There are a host of informal factors that can also influence a project, and these need to be taken fully into account during project planning and implementation.

Appendix I – WSUP Informal Influences Checklist: a question checklist to help programme managers with identification of informal influences.

1) Macro/central level

These questions relate to the general, over-arching pattern of informal influences at play in the country where the project is located, and how might these affect the project.

1.1) Informal influences on central government policy:

1.1a) Are political decisions generally respected?

1.1b) Does the government respect the rights of citizens?

1.1c) Are municipalities given the autonomy to make decisions on basic service delivery?

1.2) Pro-poorness:

1.2a) Are there transfer mechanisms towards poor people?

1.2b) Are pro-poor interventions discussed as part of an ongoing public debate?

1.2c) Is there ethnic or caste-based segregation within the population?

1.3) Government's enforcement ability:

1.3a) Is there a long-term strategic vision for basic services provision that guides government action?

1.3b) Is the government able to motivate (via incentives) public and private stakeholders to work towards this vision?

1.3c) Is implementation of government policy hindered by political, economic or regional discord.

2) Local/community level

These questions relate to specific informal influences at play at the city or local level. The grid overleaf provides a framework for the types of questions that could be asked. This is by no means a definitive list, but presents a starting point for focusing information gathering. The questions can be adapted or added to depending on the context of the project locality, and on the nature of the project interventions. The answers to these questions should then be *used* to shape or adapt project design.

Category of informal influence	Municipal government considerations	Community/consumer considerations
Personal attitudes and motivations	• What are the attitudes and public commitment within different public authorities and formal providers to universal access to WASH? (e.g. do they see formalising SIP's businesses as a slight on their ability to serve the population, or do they have buy-in to this type of model?) • Is there insistence to comply with a standard design or technology criteria?	• What are the social codes of conduct, habits and elite practices within the communities targeted for intervention that govern consumer behaviours and affect project outputs? (e.g. are consumers likely to prefer to use a recently installed water kiosk or to use a long-standing informal source of water out of loyalty, even though it may be more expensive?) • Are there internal community social issues that may affect project outcomes? (e.g. security risks to women that may prevent their use of communal sanitation facilities)
Balance of power	• Is government responsibility for WASH consistent? i.e. does the balance of power change between central and municipal government depend on the success of certain WASH interventions? • What is the tenure situation in informal settlements? How does tenure security (or lack of it) affect the incentives of the public authority to invest in WASH infrastructure?	• If responsibility for managing WASH is delegated to communities, will financial responsibility and accountability be delegated as well? • How does tenure security (or lack of it) affect the incentives of landlords and tenants to invest in WASH infrastructure?
Corruption and "conflict of interest" issues	• Where is the public authority responsible for WASH choosing to target service expansion, and what is the motivation for that choice? • Are taxes and bribes affecting profitability of the providers?	• Do community managers have integrity not to trade 'votes' for access to WASH services?
Social positioning & status	• Is the social status of certain government positions lower than others, suggesting that certain individuals may be more prone to informal profiting from the system? Will these individuals have influence over the project?	• Do existing LSPs have significant social standing and loyalty in the communities they serve? (This would make it difficult to open the market up to new entrants) • To what extent are the informal governing rules of the community supportive of equitable access for marginalised people?
Accountability issues	• Are formal norms (contracts, policies) adequately enforced? • Is the municipal government heavily influenced by central government or relatively autonomous? • Is there transparency within utilities' corporate governance structures?	• Does the community have the means to adopt project ownership and a social regulation model that will result in good accountability? (e.g. are community managers well respected and of good social standing, and do they have the capacity to manage and make financial decisions?)

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