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Policy Brief #2

Institutional Arrangements

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G·R·I·D ARENDAL

The Issue

African nations face enormous challenges in providing effective wastewater management and adequate sanitation. There is a growing consensus that the inability to address these challenges is primarily due to weak and inefficient governance and institutional capacity to ensure service delivery to all. To properly address these challenges requires strong and accountable public institutions that are able to mediate between competing interests of users, including the poor. This is true even when there is political will, leadership and funding. Achieving wastewater management and sanitation goals can only happen if there is adequate institutional capacity at national, regional, and local levels. Therefore, to maximize the impact and prospects of sustainable service delivery programmes, effective institutional arrangements, especially at national and sub-national levels, need to be in place as part of an integrated approach to sustainable wastewater management and sanitation provision.

Sanitation is the safe management of human excreta, as well as maintenance of conditions for hygiene, and human well-being through the proper management of other domestic solid and liquid wastes. Wastewater is "a combination of one or more of: domestic effluent consisting of black-water (excreta, urine and faecal sludge) and greywater (kitchen and bathing wastewater); water from commercial establishments and institutions, including hospitals; industrial effluent, stormwater and other urban run-off; agricultural, horticultural and aquaculture effluent, either dissolved or as suspended matter".

> "It has been said that the current water crisis is mainly a crisis of governance – much more than a crisis of water shortage or water pollution per se."
>
> *Global Water Partnership 2017*

What makes a good water governance institution?

Institutions for good water governance have some or all of the following characteristics:

- they are transparent and accessible, especially when it comes to finances, and policy- and decision-making, and must allow for coordination between sectors;
- they have systems for communication and inclusiveness that ensure and maintain stakeholder engagement;
- they must be progressive in view of changes in complexity of sanitation and wastewater management practices to allow for policy measures that take into account the interconnectedness between different actors;
- they must work towards equitable and ethical solutions that are aided by legal and regulatory frameworks which are fair to all interested groups, and seek equity between societal groups, including women and men, and rich and poor.

Rob Barnes

Regional Institutions

Institutions created at African and regional economic community levels provide the necessary political and policy guidance. While in the majority of cases the aim of such institutiuons is to guide efforts for poverty eradication and regional integration, they are also conscious of the role played by water and other environmental resources in improving the quality of human life. These institutions include wastewater management and sanitation provision as part of their support for Africa's sustainable development agenda.

Institutions such as the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) design and implement the various policies and decisions of the African Union (AU). Using their convening power, they provide an important networking platform and bring together African governments and other stakeholders to develop common positions on issues and programmes to be implemented at national and local levels. The AMCOW and AMCEN also engage in awareness-raising, knowledge management and dissemination programmes. They also review and monitor programmes at regional, sub-regional and national levels through processes such as AMCOW's Country Status Overviews that provide state and trends on national water supply and sanitation.

African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW)

AMCOW was formed in Abuja, Nigeria in 2002. Its primary aim is to promote cooperation, security, social and economic development, and poverty eradication among member states through effective management of the continent's water resources and the provision of water supply services. AMCOW therefore provides the sectoral leadership at the regional level needed to tackle water challenges in Africa.

In 2008, at the 11th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Sharm el-Sheikh, Heads of State and Government of the AU agreed on commitments to accelerate the achievement of water and sanitation goals in Africa and mandated AMCOW to develop an implementation strategy for these commitments. AMCOW has also been accorded the status of

AMCOW's Vision

To promote cooperation, security, social and economic development, and poverty eradication among Member States through the effective management of Africa's water resources and provision of water supply services in a bid to realize the 2025 Africa Water Vision.

Rob Barnes

The N'gor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene – Commitments

1. Focus on the poor, marginalised and unserved, and aim at progressively eliminating inequalities in access and use; and implement national and local strategies with an emphasis on equity and sustainability;
2. Mobilise support and resources at the highest political level for sanitation and hygiene to prioritise sanitation and hygiene in national development plans;
3. Establish and track sanitation and hygiene budget lines that consistently increase annually to reach a minimum of 0.5% GDP by 2020;
4. Ensure strong leadership and coordination at all levels to build and sustain governance for sanitation and hygiene across sectors especially water, health, nutrition, education, gender and the environment;
5. Develop and fund strategies to bridge the sanitation and hygiene human resource capacity gaps at all levels;
6. Ensure inclusive, safely-managed sanitation services and functional hand-washing facilities in public institutions and spaces;
7. Progressively eliminate untreated waste, encouraging its productive use;
8. Enable and engage the private sector in developing innovative sanitation and hygiene products and services especially for the marginalised and unserved;
9. Establish government-led monitoring, reporting, evaluation, learning and review systems;
10. Enable continued active engagement with AMCOW's AfricaSan process.

Specialized Committee for Water and Sanitation in the AU, to supervise and evaluate AU decisions and programmes.

In 2002, AMCOW, through the ecological sanitation (EcoSan) initiatives, helped design the Millennium Development Goal for sanitation - to reduce, by half, the number of people without access to basic sanitation and hygiene by 2015. Although the sanitation goals were not achived, a few years later AMCOW came up with the 2008 eThekwini Declaration to lead in the establishment, review, update and adoption of national sanitation and hygiene policies.

At the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals, and under the leadership of AMCOW, in 2015 African governments came up with another set of targets under the Dakar Declaration, which is also referred to as N'gor Commitments on Sanitation and Hygiene. Under the N'gor Commitments, AMCOW identified actions that were later included in the Dar es Salaam Roadmap for Achieving Water Security and Sanitation in Africa. While the N'gor Commitments emphasize sanitation and hygiene, they also note the need to eliminate waste and to encourage its reuse. AMCOW was also active in the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG6 on clean water and sanitation, by ensuring that the goals were linked to Africa's Agenda 2063.

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

Established in 1985, AMCEN is the continent's permanent Ministerial authority on the environment and sustainable development. It provides continent-wide political leadership and policy guidance on global and regional environmental issues.

The AMCEN acknowledges the link between the environment and poverty. Its role includes protecting Africa's environment from harm caused by agriculture and other economic activities.

Regional Economic Communities

The work programme of both AMCOW and AMCEN is often reflected at the regional economic community levels, including through the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA).

While the key aim of the regional economic communities is to foster regional integration and economic development, most also have water resource management initiatives, including SADC's Regional Water Supply and Sanitation Programme and ECOWAS's West African Water Vision. These programmes are examples of institutions that provide political and policy direction on water supply and sanitation issues at the sub-regional level.

SADC – Regional Water Supply & Sanitation Programme

The SADC Regional Water Supply & Sanitation Programme is housed in the Water Division of the Infrastructure and Services Directorate of the SADC Secretariat. The objective of this programme is to establish a collaborative regional framework for effective planning and management of water supply and sanitation. Thematic areas of focus include:

- Supporting country financing needs and developing their approaches to financing;
- Strengthening national water supply and sanitation institutions;
- Supporting infrastructure development;
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation; and
- Knowledge management.

ECOWAS - West African Vision

In 2000, ECOWAS adopted the West African Vision for water, life and environment for 2025. Among other things, the vision emphasizes the provision of safe drinking water and proper waste disposal. The West African Vision states the goal: "In 2025, water resources are managed in an effective and practical way, in a sustainable way for the environment so that each person in the region can have access to safe drinking water for basic needs, waste disposal, food security; poverty is reduced, human health is protected, and biodiversities of terrestrial and aquatic systems are protected."

National Level Institutions

Rapid population growth, inadequate water supply and poor sanitation services have resulted in a strong emphasis on the construction of new facilities by national governments and non-governmental organizations. However, even when water is available, risks of contamination persist. This is in a large part due to an insufficient focus on the sustainable management of service delivery. When water and sanitation facilities are developed, they are not always properly maintained. This is evidenced by the high ratio of faulty hand pumps in rural areas and the high leakage rates in urban water distribution systems. Poorly managed facilities lead to declining service levels that in turn reduce the chances of good cost recovery – resulting in service demand outpacing investment in service delivery.

Rob Barnes

At the national level, different government ministries – such as those responsible for water, environment, local government and health – may all have a mandate to deal with wastewater and sanitation issues. Thus, a clear definition is needed of institutional roles and responsibilities and there needs to be a consensus on which organization leads safe drinking water, wastewater and sanitation programmes. This would minimize duplication of activities and in some cases inaction due to overlapping, competing or even conflicting mandates. It will also ensure proper coordination and harmonious deployment of resources to priority areas.

Institutions responsible for delivering such services can be public, private or cooperatively owned and managed. This typically involves collection, treatment, distribution, quality control, as well as the safe disposal of sewage and reuse of water.

Rob Barnes

Local Level Institutions

Governance at a local level is critical to translate national policies into action. An important component of this is achieving devolution of responsibility to the local level where capacity to implement and manage service delivery might be weakest, and where support from national level institutions may be necessary to achieve sustainability.

Communities at the local level may create a water user association to manage water supply and sanitation services. These institutions can either exist independently or form part of a larger regional or national water user association. Strategic partnerships can also be formed with government departments and non-governmental organizations that can provide useful assistance in establishing these associations. For example, in South Africa and Namibia a private or local council water authority sells bulk water to communities and towns where a oocal water committee takes responsible for distribution, operations and maintenance, billing and communication.

> Regulatory bodies must provide a clear legal and policy framework so that community–managed water supply and sanitation is held to the same standards and legislation that applies to other kinds of service providers.
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> *Global Water Partnership 2017*

Local institutions are involved in all aspects of providing water supply and sanitation services – from designing the plans to constructing wastewater treatment facilities, connecting homes to a sewage system and operating the system. For example, Rand Water supplies water to 13 municipalities in South Africa, as well as manages wastewater treatment plants.

Apart from building and operating the actual water supply and sanitation network, local institutions can also provide assistance to social service programmes by disseminating knowledge on national sanitation, wastewater and hygiene strategies. In order to achieve this level of active coordination and collaboration, close contact needs to be maintained between these institutions and governments, especially at the local level. For instance, in order to disseminate information and effect behavioural change, the Ministry of Rural and Urban Hydraulics of Chad entered into agreements with district community radio stations to air programmes on hand washing and Community-Led Total Sanitation.

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