Investigating Issues of Rural Water Point Sustainability: A Field Study

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WASH in Zimbabwe

- 65% of rural water points in the country are not functioning
  - Did not meet MDG targets, access to clean water is regressing
  - Rural water provision a government identified need
  - Female burden
  - CBM framework for rural water

1. Zimbabwe 2010 MDG progress report
Research Description

- **Purpose**: Improve implementation, accountability, community support
- **Goal**: Determine factors that affect water point sustainability and identify methods of mitigating those factors.
- **Objectives**:
  - Supply evidence to determine the relationship between effective water point user committees (WPCs) and operational water points
  - Identify best practices of WPCs
  - Identify areas of improvement that could increase water point sustainability
Research Question Topics

- Factors of downtime
- Optimal fee collection methods
- Community trust of WPC
- Seasonality
- Breakdown effects
- Supply chain of replacement parts
- WPC training
- Monitoring systems
- Water point sharing
Methodology

- Total of 27 **WPCs** interviewed
  - Gender of Respondents: 66% Male, 33% Female
  - Average Age: 48 years
- Five **VPMs** from different wards interviewed
  - Gender of Respondents: 100% Male
  - Average Age: 51 years
- **Key Informants**
  - WVZ staff
  - District Water Officer
  - Ministry of Health Worker
Water Point Committee Results

Water Point Functionality
- Not Functioning: 37%
- Functioning Well: 41%
- Reduced Capacity: 22%

WPC Chairperson Gender
- Female: 70%
- Male: 30%
Elements of a Functioning WPC

- Meeting at Least Monthly: 48.1%
- Regular Caretaker Maintenance: 63.0%
- Majority of WPC Attended Training: 70.4%
- 59.3%
Contributing Factors to Extended Down Time of Water Points

- Lack of Spare Parts: 64%
- Disagreement with Community: 55%
- Disagreement with Community: 68%
- Other: 32%
90% of WPCs reported attempting to collect fees, only 55% said the collection was effective
70% of WPCs had $0-20 in their fund (the majority of those having $0)
Most common method of fee collection were community meetings
Income generating activities were not prevalent
63% of WPCs have penalties for non-payers but they are not always enforced
Treasurer is most likely to hold the money and be responsible for keeping financial records
WPC Trainings

- Areas of trainings respondents liked/found helpful
- Need for refresher courses
- Expansion of curriculum
- Request for more sharing of information between WPCs
WPC Trainings Respondent Quotes

Knowledge is meant to be shared.

We will see our mistakes and learn from each other.

Workshops lead to changes, more workshops mean more development.
Village Pump Mechanic Results

- Wide variability of experience (5 months to 15 years)
- Number of water points serviced also varied (1-21)
- Distances traveled for repairs ranged from 1-10 kilometers
- Major challenges: Lack of spare parts, lack of adequate tools
- Minor challenges: Payment for services, communication problems with WPCs
- 80% of VPMs surveyed requested refresher trainings at least once a year.
I see it as an important job because if the villages go without safe and clean water there are many diseases.

Most of the VPMs do the work for free because water is life and we want to help the community.
WSO Interview Results

- Receive maintenance requests every 1-2 weeks
- Major challenges: Lack of spare parts and adequate tools
- Additional issue: Transportation over large service area
- Need for better trained/more effective VPMs
Key Informant Results

- Interviewed Environmental Health Officer, District Water Technician and World Vision WASH staff member
- Key points of agreement
  - Focus needs to be on ‘software’
  - Need to **capacitate** people at the community level
  - **Limitations** exist that do not allow their suggestions to be implemented
Recommendations

- Avoid “water is free”
- Improve supply chain of replacement parts
- Provide skills for income generating activities
- Pre-breakdown collection of fees with an increasing fee schedule
- Annual refresher courses for WPC
- Increase WPC legitimacy
- Develop partnerships, communication mechanisms and monitoring
Research Limitations

- Limited time
- No budget
- Timing during the end of the BMZ project and end of year for WV
- Translation
Unintended Effects

- Inspired WPC action
- Provision of spares for rehabilitations
- Increased communication between WV and partners about needs
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