

7th Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 29 November – 2 December 2016, Radisson Blu Hotel, Abidjan Airport

Theme: Water for Everyone

Jane Nabunnya Mulumba 05 December, 2016

Introduction:

The 7th Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 29 November to 2 December 2016. The RWSN forum takes place every five years and provides an opportunity for members to learn from one another and for those new in rural water supplies to gain from those with experience. It is a platform for sharing innovations that can challenge the status quo, for new connections to be forged and the foundation of trust to be laid to collaborate in the future. The 7th RWSN Forum provided a platform to improve rural water supplies by learning from one another and was an opportunity for rural water supply professionals and practitioners to meet and share their knowledge.

Stef Smits in his blog (<http://www.ircwash.org/blog/progress-going-abidjan-abidjan>) provides a detailed synthesis of the Forum with his reflection describing the progress that has been made in rural water supply between the October 1986 Abidjan seminar on low cost rural and urban water supply and the November 2016 7th RWSN Forum.

Below is a summary of some sessions I participated¹ in with key messages that I picked which resonate with the situation in Uganda:

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
Opening session	Participant	The opening session was presided over by Hon. Daniel Kablan Duncan the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire. In attendance were: Hon. Patrick Achi Jerome the Minister of Economic Infrastructure, the Ethiopian Deputy Water Minister, Aboubakar Kampo, UNICEF resident representative, Sering Jallow Africa Development Bank representative and Alex Bakalean among others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to contribute to the promotion of innovative and appropriate approaches, sharing and learning around low cost and affordable technologies for rural households • SDG6 is a commitment to reach and serve everyone with safe and clean and safe water • Governments need to fund water projects. Focus should be on the underserved and their voices should be heard and responded to • Women in rural areas need to access water services. This will free them and allow them to participate in other productive tasks • The need to support and fund local units that can make spare parts available. Governments have to encourage and organise the local units to raise funds for these operators • The need to allocate funds for monitoring and capacity development • Governments must supervise follow-up and implementation of identified solutions and this requires political will

¹ Other participants from Uganda (that I was able to meet) included: Dr. Callist Tindimugaya (Ministry of Water and Environment), Paul Kimera (MWE/Appropriate Technology Centre), Mary Namwebe (Goal), Adam Harvey (Whave), Jacinta Nekesa (WaterAid), Plan Uganda, Dennis Nabembezi (NaNa Development Consultants Ltd)

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability strategies for rural water should clearly include pro-poor priorities • There are many other sectors competing with WASH for funding hence the need to make the WASH needs and priorities more visible
Session 3A: Progress in empowering communities	Rapporteur	<p>The session provided a cross-cutting discussion of experiences of empowering communities to engage effectively with government to increase access to water and sanitation. The session also investigated attempts to change power relations between people and the government; mechanisms to do this and intended and unintended consequences.</p> <p>The session also looked at issues around sustainability and the responsibility to communities and individuals who may face negative backlash as a result of demanding their rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups comprise of different stakeholders with different needs. Such as persons with disabilities, women, children, girls etc. They have different needs which should be addressed and prioritised differently • The human rights approach provides opportunities for everybody to participate in development and decision making processes • A lot of work has been done to reach the vulnerable groups, but still many of them cannot access safe water and acceptable sanitation facilities • Vulnerable groups should be involved in all the stages of a project right from conception and implementation of the project. This will enable them to feed into the projects from start to end. They will participate in identifying the gaps, access relevant information and take collective action • Different communication channels should be used to address the needs of the vulnerable groups. These can include direct interaction such as meetings with authorities, use of media (e.g. local radios) and traditional communicator to exert pressure on the service authorities • Scaling up strategies should be developed to move the pilot projects to levels of adoption and reach to more locations and people • More awareness on the right to water and sanitation should be created with emphasis on the fact that the right to water and sanitation does not mean that water and sanitation facilities are free. The message should be clear that Water should be affordable to everybody. This will require building the capacity of service authorities to improve supply and also building the capacities of the communities to improve the demand side. • Communities should be educated to know and appreciate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They too have roles and responsibilities in addressing any inequalities and promoting all rights including the right to water and sanitation – Government is not expected to provide everything but should create policies and laws that provide a conducive environment for the communities to participate in decisions making processes – Addressing the right to water and sanitation requires that the duty bearers and the rights holders should be enabled to work together – The right to water does not mean that water should be free. As consumers, it is their duty to pay for water services, and it is the duty of government to establish mechanisms to control the tariff so that water is not too expensive for the

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
			<p>communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Achieving the human right to water and sanitation is not an overnight affair. It is a progressing accomplishment – There is no conflict between the business model and the right to water and sanitation. They are both different business of the same puzzle
<p>Session 4A: Progress in sustainable rural water services</p>	<p>Panellist representing civil society</p>	<p>The session discussion the current state of sustainable rural and small town water supply and the building blocks which need to be in place in order to ensure sustainable rural water service provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For rural water services to sustained, complimentary roles of all actors at different levels need to come to play • Key functions for sustainable rural water services include; institutionalised capacities, sustainable financing, monitoring, regulation, asset management and water resources management • Professionalising service providers will ensure post construction support • Comprehensive country wide monitoring should be a continuous process • Sector learning should be promoted and should include reflections on decentralisation of rural water services, monitoring, tariff setting, climate change and adaptation. Peer to peer learning should be encouraged • The role of civil society in rural water services should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support government to develop clear and practical policies, laws, guidelines and standards – Capacity development of the community structure – Advocacy and lobbying for increased funding, for prioritising WASH and for promoting a conducive operating environment for WASH – Testing innovative models – Supporting government to monitor and supervise – Promoting learning and reflection – what works, what does not work etc. • Sustainability requires a full systems approach

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
Session 6B: NGOs, Consultants and Researchers - taking innovation to scale	Chair	The session introduced some experiences from researchers and NGOs work in supporting provision of sustainable water supply through water services monitoring and the use of ICT to support regular data collection and new approaches to support O&M of water services. The presentations ranged from experiences in support of district level monitoring processes (in support of local governments) to pilots. The session discussion was an opportunity to extract some key learning from different sector experiences to inform future approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is everywhere, but it is not properly collected and used nor is it well coordinated • Local governments staff need to be supported to conduct well organised monitoring • Data management should involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integration with other information – Standardisation – Plans for beyond the project – Contextual analysis – Effective reporting mechanisms • Investing in good enumerators means investing in good data: working with the same team of enumerators • Good data isn't cheap • Don't ignore the outliers in your data set. As part of quality control process, all data sets should be checked and re-verified for errors, outliers and mistakes before subsequent trend analysis. • Keep it relevant, visual and simple. By using recognizable WASH indicators and simple GIS maps showing water coverage and system functionality • Don't collect data for data's sake. You have to know, in advance of collecting the data, what you are going to use the data for. • More thought should be put into developing a more cost-effective, field-focused and systematic data validation process.
Sessions 8B and 9B: Unlocking potential of local government (2)	Chair	The session provided an overview of the main influencers of local government and with that the way to strengthen local government capacity. Some of the entry points included: supporting citizens and media to hold government to account and in that way put pressure on government to perform better, training and skills development, collaboration between national and local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected representatives should be involved in monitoring the management of public drinking water • Local governments should provide communities with enough space to take charge of operation and management as well as in the implementation processes • District local governments should be encouraged to generate practical solutions for improving rural WASH service delivery using existing resources • Peer-to-peer learning forums for local governments and all WASH actors should be organized and supported to share successes and challenges faced, as well as building inter district relationships • District water supply systems should be designed within the available district government resource constraints • Strong monitoring and follow up support to community structures such as hand pump mechanics and water point committees is essential. This can involve; regular communication with mechanics, providing mentorship to overcome technical challenges or community conflicts, and raising awareness about the mechanics at community level. • Building strong district teams enables district government water office staff to get

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
			<p>involved and to share a common vision. It is easier for them to support each other in achieving individual outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of WASH infrastructure often focuses on building the technical capacity of permanent stakeholders, or even contracting out these technical jobs, and avoids addressing the management and operations skills required to function as service authorities. • Building non-technical skills of extension workers in facilitation, management, and conflict management through projects can improve community interactions. • Improving rural WASH service delivery by local governments takes careful consideration of the resource envelope, planning for support of community structures, building strong district offices, and ensuring that NGO approaches are aligned with each other and with government
Field visit	Participant	<p>The one-day field visit took place in Soumie village, 160 km from Abidjan in Aboisso district in the South Comoe region. This region is part of the intervention areas of the PADEHA program financed by the Government of the Netherlands and UNICEF.</p> <p>Participants visited a manual drilling site and held discussions with the drillers and community members. The field visit specifically aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the manual drilling technology using small electric drilling tools • Exchange views and learn from the beneficiaries about manual drilling and its benefits • Learn about the communities' plans to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual drilling refers to several drilling methods that rely on human energy to construct a borehole and complete a water supply. The various techniques can be used in areas where formations are quite soft and groundwater is relatively shallow. • Manual drilling can provide safe drinking water. The equipment can easily be transported to remote, or difficult to serve populations which would otherwise be left behind. The lower costs compared to machine drilling are appreciated by households, businesses and governments. • Manual drilling also provides local employment. • Manual drilling methods are being used to provide water for drinking and other domestic needs at least 36 countries around the world. In some places, manual drilling methods are well established. • Manual drilling is cheaper and very cost effective than mechanically drilled water-points • Manual drilling can be undertaken in remote areas (where accessibility is a problem for the large trucks necessary for mechanical drilling). • Manual drilling is an effective way to provide water sources in emergencies context and in periods of instability.

Session	Role	Description of session	Some key messages
		management their new water sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify some constraints and opportunities related to the sustainable supply of drinking water for vulnerable populations 	