

Kenya

Civil society organisation involvement in urban water sector reform





Two boys drink water from a pipe in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya.
Yasuyoshi Chiba/
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Front cover photo:
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Anthony Njuguna

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This is one of a series of nine case studies outlining civil society organisations' (CSOs) involvement in urban water sector reform. The other case studies cover the following locations:

- **Bangladesh (Chittagong and Dhaka)**
- **Brazil (Recife) and Venezuela (Caracas)**
- **Ghana (Accra)**
- **Nepal (Kathmandu)**
- **Pakistan (Karachi)**
- **Philippines (Manila)**
- **Uganda (Kampala)**
- **Ukraine**

The case studies accompany the guidance manual ***Our water, our waste, our town***, which offers support to civil society in engaging in urban water and sanitation reforms.

The manual and case studies can all be downloaded at:
www.wateraid.org/urbanreform



WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

Section one: Background and problem

In the early part of this decade, the Kenyan urban water and sanitation sector was in crisis. It was characterised by corruption, lack of investment, inefficiencies, poor management and a confusing array of legal and institutional frameworks. Fortunately, with the introduction of the Water Act in 2002, things started to change. The aim of the Water Act was to make the sector more manageable, increase accountability and divide up the running of sewerage services. In order to do this, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation created new bodies and new roles and responsibilities for existing institutions.

One of the Water Act's aims was to increase stakeholder and beneficiary

community involvement in the planning and operation of water supply facilities. However, the voice of consumers in the sector remained unheard.

CSOs and citizen groups have been involved in water service delivery in Kenya for more than 20 years. They have focused on extending water services to the marginalised and very poor in rural and urban areas. They therefore gained substantial hands-on, grass roots experience in the sector. However, they do not have experience in advocacy for structural reform in the sector. As a result, the Water Act of 2002 was undertaken largely with government and partner donors in the driving seat.

Section two: What CSOs have done

CSOs wanted to give people living in local communities a say in how their water sector is run. With technical assistance from the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program (Africa Region), CSOs from Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa worked together to use Citizen Report Cards (CRCs) to give water consumers a voice. CRCs are

surveys in which local communities rate the performance of public utilities, like those for water and sewerage. Consumers' perceptions, collected during a randomised sample survey, are used together to rate the services and released publicly in concise reports called 'Report Cards'. The release, accompanied by media

attention, raises awareness of the ways that services are meeting, or not meeting, the needs of users, and the

priority areas that providers need to act on to improve users' satisfaction.

The CSOs worked through a ten-step process:

1. **They held a workshop and invited all stakeholders.**

The Public Affairs Centre of Bangalore in India, which pioneered the Report Cards, provided support to make this happen.

2. **Four stakeholder groups were set up: one in each city and one at national level.**

City groups were made up of everyone from representatives of local government and the utilities, to community residents' associations and local media. In each city, this group was chaired by one of three prominent CSOs, called lead agencies. The national group was made up of representatives from the Ministry of Water as well as the regulator and donors who support the urban water and sanitation sector.

3. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with local communities.**

These FGDs were led by relevant lead agencies in poor, middle income and richer areas with combined and separate groups of men and women, leaders and youth groups. The aim was to come up with ideas for the community survey.

4. **The lead agencies wrote up the FGDs.**

5. **The CSOs worked together to come up with terms of reference (ToR) for analysing the FGD data.**

6. **A professional social survey agency was engaged to finalise the survey and collect and analyse data using rigorous social research techniques.**

7. **The survey agency and CSOs worked together to come up with survey questions based on the FGDs.**

Key issues included everything from issues of water quality and reliability of services to the prevalence of bribery and suggestions for improvements in collecting the demographic details of the respondents/households.

8. **The surveys were carried out.**

Data were collected from 3,000 randomly selected households in three cities through a household interview lasting approximately one hour.

9. **The data was analysed and a survey report prepared by the survey firm.**

10. **CRCs were written for each of the three cities, plus a national summary.**

Section three: Challenges and outcomes

Challenges

All the CSOs involved faced a learning curve: none had any significant experience of engaging in advocacy on urban water supply and sanitation, and so had to increase their capacity to understand the issues. This meant they had to work closely with other agencies involved in water supply and sanitation, brought into the process through the stakeholder groups.

Putting the stakeholder groups together was a challenge in itself. There were fears that the managers of public service agencies and CSOs would not be able to work collaboratively together.

Outcomes

CSOs launched the findings of the CRCs at a public event in May 2007. It was attended by 400 people including mayors, senior government officials and water company representatives. The slogan ‘Water and sanitation? Come all, let’s discuss and agree.’ was adopted for the launch to unify citizens, service providers and policy makers in the spirit of dialogue, rather than confrontation.

CSOs presented the CRC findings to the public and then service providers presented their responses. As a result:

- The Kenyan Government promised that policy would be put in place

to address the problems in the sector. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation committed to consulting with citizens over their new National Water Services Strategy which, they promised, would address issues of the poor urban water and sanitation services.

- The Ministry of Health committed to subjecting its National Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Policy to citizen review and dialogue prior to its full implementation.
- The Ministry of Local Government assured citizens that they would put in place a new solid waste management policy by the end of the year.
- Service providers promised to secure additional investment for infrastructure, to implement programmes to correct what was going wrong and to scale up existing initiatives.
- Lead agencies promised to monitor service providers’ compliance with their public commitment.

Thanks to a press conference, attended by around 30 journalists, the event featured in 19 radio and television reports.

The CSOs involved have now committed to continuing with a range of advocacy activities, using local and national media as well as their own networks. They plan to further publicise the CRC findings and continue to call for consumer involvement in the sector.

Since the launch, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has committed to engaging with civil society in the development of policy. ToRs are being jointly developed with stakeholders. The Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB) has drafted simplified Customer Complaints Procedure Guidelines for adoption in the sector, which will be tested with citizens before finalisation. In response to the CRC finding that citizens would like more direct engagement with their service providers, it has also appointed citizens to provide regular feedback in four of the eight water

service board cities in the country. Dubbed Water and Sanitation Action Groups, or WAGs for short, citizen representatives are responsible for monitoring sector performance in accordance with official standards, facilitating public hearings and other accountability tools, and explaining citizens' rights and responsibilities under the regulatory regime. The WAGs' role is to support dialogue between the grassroots, the utilities, water services boards and ultimately the national regulator, thereby making the decentralisation of the reform more meaningful to citizens.

Overall, the CRCs have helped initiate country-wide citizen feedback in the sector. Building on the framework of the Water Act of 2002, WASREB will work in partnership with the new consumer forums to identify ways to regularly measure citizen satisfaction across the country.

Section four: Lessons learnt and top tips

Lessons learnt

The stakeholder groups, which met regularly, have provided an important platform for interaction and dialogue between service providers, policy makers, citizens and resident groups. Members did not always agree but the process got stakeholders talking and helped establish a better relationship between CSOs and service delivery agencies.

The utilities were pleasantly surprised to discover that CSOs were willing to try to understand the challenges they faced, and CSOs were pleased that utilities welcomed the Report Cards, and want to use them to learn what improvements they should prioritise to improve consumer satisfaction. At the national level, the regulator and the ministry have also welcomed and supported the initiative.

The CRC process also harnessed CSOs' ability to understand the problems faced by the poor in accessing water, sanitation and solid waste management services, and their talents for using statistical information to advocate for change. Better understanding of urban

water, sanitation and solid waste management issues, as well as service delivery agencies and survey data, will be invaluable in future CSO-driven reforms. Also, the experience will benefit consumer forums that are being established and future CRCs.

Top tips

1. **Don't let lack of advocacy experience or knowledge of the sector deter you** from taking action on reforms.
2. **Bring in outside agencies** that have knowledge that your CSO members do not. For example, the social survey agency employed by the lead agencies.
3. **Prepare well before you take action.** The lead agencies were identified at the initial workshop attended by all major stakeholders.
4. **Identify your priorities.** CSOs prioritised lack of consumer involvement, although there are other issues that need to be addressed in the Kenyan urban water and sanitation sector, such as attracting investment, coordinating stakeholders and increasing the focus on sanitation.
5. **Spread the word.** Outcomes of the CRCs were well publicised through the public launch and everyone who needed to know about them was invited to the event well in advance.

In 2002, the Kenyan Government introduced the Water Act to reform the urban water sector. At the time, the sector was characterised by corruption, lack of investment, inefficiencies, poor management and a confusing array of legal and institutional frameworks.

This case study outlines the success that Kenyan CSOs in three cities have had in using Citizen Report Cards to enable poor communities to engage with city water utilities and highlight the priority areas the reforms should tackle.

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