20th AfWA International Congress and Exhibition 2020
Breaking new grounds to accelerate access to water and sanitation for all in Africa

Working with the grain to improve rural water supply

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DEVELOPMENT’S SILVER BULLETS

- Simplified policy formulas that are decontextualized and depoliticised
- Based on notions such as ‘best practice’ and ‘good governance’; often irrelevant or unrealistic in local settings
- Applied mechanically, these ‘silver bullets’ not only fail to deliver but prevent local actors from coming together to provide their own solutions
- E.g. the associational model of CBM
How do researchers move beyond critique and evidence of complexity to also provide constructive guidance and recommendations?
WORKING WITH THE GRAIN

- From ‘best practice’ to ‘best fit’
- Alternative approaches *locally anchored* in the problems people face and their accepted ways of doing things
- Existing institutions, practices, values and beliefs become resources to work with rather than obstacles to overcome
- Possible similarities to how many NGOs and government officials staff work
- A danger of reproducing or entrenching existing unequal power relations
HIDDEN CRISIS PROJECT
TEAM AND COUNTRIES OVERVIEW

Ethiopia
Population 87 million
38% coverage of improved rural water supply (JMP 2012)
(=36% increase in proportion of population with access since 1995)
Estimated 32% not functioning or functioning with difficulties

Uganda
Population 34 million
70% coverage of improved rural water supply (JMP 2012)
(=45% increase in proportion of population with access since 1995)
Estimated 18% not functioning or functioning with difficulties

Malawi
Population 15 million
80% coverage of improved rural water supply (JMP 2012)
(=50% increase in proportion of population with access since 1995)
Estimated 34% not functioning or functioning with difficulties
RESEARCH DESIGN

- Political economy analysis
- District sustainability assessments

- Survey 1: **WHAT** are the issues?
- Survey 2: **WHY** do these issues occur?
- Longitudinal studies: **HOW** do wider livelihood concerns relate to water management, access, and use over 1 year
Waterpoint committee

- Formal roles and responsibilities
- Composition
- Training(s)
- Devise and enforce rules
- Regular meetings
- Regular user fees
- Regular maintenance
- Repair works
- External support, spare parts availability

Water management arrangement

1. Funds
2. Maintenance and repair
3. Authority and leadership
4. Legitimacy
5. Equity
6. Decision-making, rules, and enforcement
7. Roles and responsibilities
8. Stakeholder linkages
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Other actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Iddir, kebele, guard, church, NGOs, woreda water office, other community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Village chief, councillors, MP, NGOs, mosque/sheikh, health surveillance assistant, area mechanic, school/teachers, youth club, other community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>LC1 chairperson, LC3 and LC4 chairs, MP, mayor, NGOs, school/teachers, sub-county chief, area mechanic, village health technician, health extension worker, other community members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## A TYPOLOGY OF WATER MANAGERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State/formal/Exogenous</th>
<th>Informal/endogenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual/s</strong></td>
<td>e.g. chairperson of local council; village chief</td>
<td>e.g. village elders; religious leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association/s</strong></td>
<td>e.g. waterpoint committee; school committee</td>
<td>e.g. mutual aid association; church group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHO MANAGES WATER?

- **WPC + other actor/s**
- **Key WPC members + other actor/s**
- **Other actor/s**
- **No management**

% of sites

- **Ethiopia**
- **Malawi**
- **Uganda**
In Ethiopia, bodies for managing water more *fleshed* out
- A formal body – the WASHCO - present in over 50% of sites
  - Typically in conjunction with other actors (e.g. iddir)
  - Formed under duress: “we must participate them!”
  - Some evolve into umbrella organisations; serve other functions
  - Gender inequality persists

In Uganda and Malawi we often see the bare *bones* needed to manage water
- Most common arrangement is a ‘skeleton crew’
  - Relies on key individuals – e.g. LC1 chair or chief – based on authority and proximity to waterpoint: “the borehole is not a madman”
  - The business of water management: “the borehole is my garden”
 FEATURES OF WATER MANAGEMENT

- ‘Multiplexity’, norms, and moral orders
  - Water management is not only about water
  - Arrangements must typically conform to the ‘right way of doing things’

- Authority and involvement in wider village life
  - People with power and authority tend to be most active
  - These people often involved in other areas

- Proximity to borehole
  - Quite common for key individuals to live next to or near waterpoint
  - Sometimes this is because they have influenced siting

- Gendered dimension of water management
  - Gender discrimination and inequality fairly common
  - There are exceptions to this rule
WORKING WITH THE GRAIN?

- Making complexity legible
  - Despite complexity of real-world social dynamics, common features often exist and can be worked with

- Equity and working with the grain
  - Trade off between functionality and equity?
  - NOTE: Associational model does not address equity
  - Realistic – recognize what is possible

- Local government staff with the skills to negotiate social relations and work with local actors and institutions
  - Politically smart, locally led development
  - Importance of an enabling environment
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You are welcome