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GLoWSPROS presents problems and potential solutions that have been developed in the context of the capacity building programme Guided Learning on Water and Sanitation (GLOWS) in Ethiopia. This programme adopts a problem based approach in which participants together with community members identify key water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) problems and possible solutions. In this process they receive external support from staffs from Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVETC), Water and Health Bureaus and staff from core partners in the GLOWS programme. As a result of this process WASHCOs and Kebele leaders initiate actions that help to improve their WASH conditions, sometimes adopting very creative solutions for their problems. To make this wealth of experience available to others short write-ups are developed called GLOWSPROS (GLOWS Problems and Solutions), to help others to learn from this experience.

Functioning problems of the WASHCO

Introduction

The management of community water supply systems in Ethiopia is facing a lot of problems. Non-functionality of water schemes may range from 20 to 37%, whereas non functionality of water points can be even considerably higher (Butterworth et al., 2009). This is a serious situation but in practice conditions are even worse as many systems are showing substandard performance for lack of preventive maintenance which results in long waiting queues of users who often may receive unsafe water. Rural systems may also present a considerable level of non-revenue water which increases the price for those who pay for the water. Whereas some of these problems may be the result of limitations in design and construction the heart of the problem is that WASHCOs do not properly manage their system and are not held accountable by their users.

The main challenges

Important problems exist with management of community water systems in Ethiopia which may include:

- Lack of management perception and experience of the WASHCO, only taking care of a limited part of their task.
- Lack of management and monitoring tools that are based on local conditions.
- No proper supervision of operators.
- Problems with accountability as the WASHCO is not reporting back to the community they serve.
- Only part of WASHCO is active.
- WASHCOs have received little or no training at all.



Long queues because of poor management



Breakdown maintenance for lack of management

Possible solution

The first step to come to a solution is to sit down with the WASHCO and jointly make an analysis of the problems looking at technical,



Exploring the problems with the WASHCO

financial and organizational aspects.

Problems will clearly depend on the local situation and may be very diverse and sometimes complex. A good way to explore this is explained in a specific GLOWS module to build the capacity of WASHCOs which is included in the CDROM with the training modules and resource materials of GLOWS. Depending on the problems several options need to be explored to improve the situation and may include:

Replacement of the WASHCO if the WASHCO is in fact not functional and perhaps the system is just operated by a few people. Another reason may be that a lot of mistrust exists among the community about the WASHCO often related to the handling of the money and for lack of reporting. If this is problem is too big, a new WASHCO will need to be elected with help of the Kebele leaders.

Enhancing the management capacity after first exploring the available capacities and the way the WASHCO operates. In some cases it may

be enough to provide some guidance for the development of some (technical and financial) tools to monitor system performance and facilitate supervision.

Training of the WASHCO may also be required and most likely can be best done on the job by staff from the Woreda Water Desk looking at management skills, monitoring, supervision and (financial) reporting (accountability). This is further explained in the specific training manual to guide Woreda staff in this type of problem based training of WASHCOs.

A detailed assessment of the system(s) as part of the problems may also be caused by deficiencies in the design of the system(s) and because of lack of maintenance.

Better involvement of private sector for maintenance and repairs may be an important point of action as well. Some of the problems with water supply systems are beyond the capacity of the WASHCO and local operators and may require involvement of the Water Bureau or the private sector. The problem is that this is often arranged only after a system is broken down, whereas this type of support may also be crucial for preventive maintenance. The shift to preventive maintenance is crucial and can be supported by skilled private sector to avoid for example the burning of pumps but also of substandard performance which may lead to unnecessary long waiting queues.

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