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Integrated Water,  
Sanitation and  
Hygiene Project

# GOVERNANCE:

## A Fundamental Component of Project Programming and Implementation

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**Prioritize and invest in good governance for sustainable WASH sector programming and service delivery**





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# 70%

lack access to basic sanitation. Kenya's rural and urban slum dwellers are most affected



# OVER 72%

of Kenyans live in rural areas and depend entirely on community enterprises for their Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services.

## Background

**Forty percent of Kenyans rely on unsafe water from** ponds, shallow wells, and rivers. Another **70 percent** lack access to basic sanitation. Kenya's rural and urban slum dwellers are most affected, as they are neither able to connect to piped water nor get access to satisfactory sanitation services. According to the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report, **over 72 percent of Kenyans live in rural areas** and depend entirely on community enterprises for their Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services. Rural water and sanitation are mainly provided through community water supply enterprises, while urban areas are mainly supplied by Water Service Providers (WSPs).

Despite rural community enterprises serving the most considerable portion of the population, their sustainability remains uncertain. According to the 2020 Kenya Integrated Water Sanitation and Hygiene (KIWASH) program Case Study, most WASH enterprises collapse after **two to five years**, concurring with the UNDP's 2015 statement that **30-50 percent** of WASH projects fail at the same time. This rampant collapse is mostly attributed to poor governance.

Challenges in the water sector (long term availability, sustainability, and inequality of access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities) are entrenched in governance issues, not those of unavailable resources. The lack of sustainable WASH enterprises has devastating

consequences for individuals, economies, and the environment. Failure to provide universal access to services limits Kenya's realization of objectives set out in Kenya's Development Blueprint (Vision 2030), which commits to a "clean and secure" environment.

## What constitutes Governance for the WASH Enterprises?

**Governance** encompasses the structures, systems, and processes designed to ensure that WASH enterprises are implemented successfully. Leadership, ethics and integrity, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, participation, roles and responsibility, regulations and stewardship, planning and coordination, and resource management are the primary issues of good governance. Governance can be subtle and may not be easily observed. In short, effective governance is about quality service, independence of government, and effective policies and project implementation.

**Governance and leadership of WASH enterprises cut across several functions, including but not limited to policy and law-making and implementation, building the capacity of sector players, planning and budgeting, resourcing and financing, including financial record keeping, organizing service delivery arrangements (public, private, mixed, etc.), coordinating actors and sector players, and Partnership building and management.**





Water technicians operating a solar inverter installed by KIWASH at Musengo Water Project.

## Why prioritize and invest in Good Governance and Effective Leadership?

Good governance is attributed to high growth in organizations and institutions. Effective governance requires coordinating and applying different competencies (budgeting, planning, leadership, monitoring, reporting) to regulate and deliver services. Success and sustainability of WASH sector reforms in Kenya rely heavily on the premise of good governance of programs, WSPs and WASH enterprises.

However, Governance and Leadership issues continue to challenge the WASH sector amidst a steady increase in demand for services, thanks to

an ever-growing population. As the population of Kenya steadily rises - recently passing 47 million people, **40 percent of Kenyans still rely on unimproved water sources, such as ponds, shallow wells, and rivers, while 70 percent of Kenyans lack access to basic sanitation solutions.**

Unless efforts are made to improve the governance of WASH interventions and programs, problems of unequal provision of services and inappropriate, unaffordable, poorly maintained, and poor-quality facilities will continue.

## Governance related Challenges in the WASH Sector

- **Ineffective policies and standards** – Sustainability of development projects is grounded in local ownership and governance, ensuring that existing policy frameworks act as the foundation upon which development is built. Governance and enabling policies are critical for WASH to ensure that all stakeholders have clearly defined roles and proper guidance. Unfortunately, not every County Government in Kenya has developed and implemented relevant WASH policies to ensure sustainability.
- **Politicization and management interference** – Politicians have often used WASH service delivery as a campaign tool rather than a key service for citizens. Political leadership must ensure that WASH projects are implemented as promised. Political interference of WASH projects often leads to them not functioning optimally.
- **Complex Management Structure** – There is a lack of clarity in managing the WASH sector in Kenya. The devolution government system, enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (COK2010), saw WASH service delivery transferred to County Governments while managing water resources, capacity building, and training remained at the National Level. However, ten years after the COK2010 was passed, much is left to expand access to WASH within the counties.
- **Unprofessionalism** – WASH enterprises are often not run professionally due to a governance system that lacks guidelines, standards, and structure. Whereas these enterprises should be run as profitable businesses that employ professionals like technicians, finance personnel, managers, and water treatment and sanitation experts, this is not the case in most instances.
- **Managerial issues** – Poor managerial and stewardship issues present a myriad of challenges in the WASH sector. This includes poor resource management, corruption, lack of appropriate institutions, bureaucratic inertia, unstructured role distributions, lack of monitoring, inadequate reporting, and nepotism that cripples the sector. Issues of ethics and integrity also lack in most cases among the staff and board of these enterprises.
- **Inadequate resources** – WASH sector governance development requires dedicated resources to support the various components. However, the current structure of governance and management of the WASH enterprises provides no dedicated resources for governance improvement. Available existing resources are often not enough to cover operational costs. Their costing structure does not factor in proper profit margins that can be directed towards strengthening governance. Neither national nor county governments set aside resources for improving the governance of WASH enterprises.
- **Lack of capacity** – Proper Governance is directly linked to the capacity of the leadership. Capacity Development programs are rare, as most enterprises lack resources and clarity of which entity should be tasked with service provision. Even in cases where capacity development programs exist, they do not target everyone within the sector. Most capacity enhancement programs target directors and the top leadership of the WASH enterprises but often limited to everyone who plays a critical role in the WASH enterprises' day-day operations. This leads to continuous insufficient capacity and a shortage of new investments that undermine WASH enterprises' effective governance.

## Policy Recommendations/ Actions required

Sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services depend on governments fulfilling their commitments, remaining accountable, and carrying out essential functions at national, county, and local levels with a participatory approach. Good governance and leadership are critical to ensure that changes take hold. KIWASH's policy recommendations are as follows:

- **Establish and formalize an association or board that governs Rural Water Enterprises** - Rural water enterprises serve a large population and are less regulated, monitored, and reported, making it more challenging to improve. Establishing rural water user associations would be a welcome step towards improving WASH sector service delivery. Associations can provide capacity strengthening support and ensure funding.
- **Establish and fund governance budget lines** - WASH enterprises need continuous capacity strengthening support towards the formulation of policies, standards, and procedures. Funding can come from both government, donors, and the community themselves. Providing more government and donor funding for the expansion and improvement of current WASH service providers enterprise network providers is critical towards strengthening governance and leadership. Effective governance capacity could lead to the emergence of new WSPs in the countryside, especially small-scale entrepreneurs.
- **Support development and adoption of policies and standards by WASH enterprises** - While most larger WASH service providers have policies in place; some still do not. National policies governing the management of WASH resources also need to be adopted by each county. According to many stakeholders, the institutions in charge of water resources management should be strengthened, starting with the Water Resources Management Authority. Moreover, an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan could lead to incremental change.
- **Develop a blended financing strategy and framework for WASH enterprises** - Adequate financing is critical for the WASH enterprises' success. To ensure sustainability, alternative funding sources and deliberate budgetary allocation is critical. A blended approach to financing the WASH sector that includes grants (recoverable and non-recoverable), community and county government contributions, and commercial financing would address current gaps. With the right strategy or framework in place, the county government, implementing partners, and the private sector could adopt a harmoniously blended finance model. This will not only ensure that WASH enterprises are bankable but will also address perennial collateral issues.

## About KIWASH

The Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (KIWASH) is a five-year program of the US Agency for International Development, implemented by DAI to improve Kenyan citizens' lives and health in nine counties through the development and management of sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services.

To ensure that access improvements are accelerated and sustained, KIWASH is implementing activities that contribute to six distinct objectives: Sector coordination and planning, Support to social behavior change campaigns (SBCC), Build capacity of county staff to promote improved risk communication and community engagement, Support water service providers (WSPs) to maintain service provision,

Security of WASH infrastructure, WASH in healthcare facilities. All six core areas are not implemented in each KIWASH focus county. Still, specific activities are selected at the national and county level in accordance with identified needs and gaps and USAID's overall WASH strategy in Kenya.

Over the last five years, the KIWASH program has worked strategically to strengthen and develop a new crop of leaders with effective governance policies to provide solutions to 21st century WASH sector-related challenges. While the overall objective of the KIWASH was not on governance, it had specific work on governance and policy reforms that led to the above recommendations if the WASH Governance and Leadership are to be addressed for sustained service delivery.



The launch of Little Sisters of St. Francis Community Water Project in Nairobi County.

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