

36th WEDC International Conference, Nakuru, Kenya, 2013

**DELIVERING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES
IN INSECURE CONTEXTS**

**The impact of water governance levels on access to water
for the most vulnerable: a case study from the Philippines**

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BRIEFING PAPER 1733

In the Philippines, and especially in the North Cotabato area, the most vulnerable people do not have access to water. Water governance in the country is improving but there are still issues to address. This research, conducted in ACF's mission in the Philippines, will study the different levels of water governance (international, national and local), their mechanisms and their interactions, in order to show how they affect access to water for the most vulnerable and how they could be improved.

Context

The Philippines have seen significant growth over the past years. Economic stability has been restored. However, despite these achievements, growth has not benefited the poor. Poverty is still an issue. According to the Asian Development Bank, “about 26% of the Philippine population live below the national poverty line, and 63% are vulnerable to poverty with income less than \$3 a day a person” (ADB, 2012).

It is now a priority for the government to improve the livelihoods of the poor through investment in human capital and social protection. Budget allocations have been increased for health, education and several other programmes. Good governance is also a high priority for the country, focusing on anti-corruption, accountability, civil society participation and transparency.

The Philippines show a consistent improvement of access to improved water (28% of the population has gained access since 1995 and 92% of the population uses an improved drinking water source¹). However 16 million Filipinos still do not have access to safe water.

The Philippines are rich in water resources, with both surface water and groundwater reserves. The Food and Agriculture Organization, in 2010, estimated that annual water use in the country accounts for only 55 percent of available supply (FAO, 2010). However, the country's water resources are suffering from degradation. It might become even more difficult to provide water to the most vulnerable.

The objective of the research, conducted from March to August 2013, is to provide an in-depth analysis of water governance mechanisms in the Philippines to investigate whether the current mechanisms ensure access to water for the most vulnerable.

The focus will be on the North Cotabato province, which is located in the central part of Mindanao. Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of households with access to safe water in the North Cotabato area has risen overall, but has fallen in the cities, due to an increase of the population and thus a heightened demand for safe water.

It is a region exposed to natural disasters, including landslides, floods and typhoons. The last typhoon in 2012 affected hundreds of thousands of households, as well as water, health and sanitation infrastructures. Furthermore, sporadic armed conflicts in Mindanao occasionally displace large populations. The large number of displaced people is increasing water demand, thus deteriorating already lacking infrastructures. This situation and the water demand from other sectors (banana farms, agriculture...) have meant that the government has been unable to guarantee universal access to water for the vulnerable population in the area.

¹ JMP 2012

This situation will require a more holistic and long-term approach, sustained by local and national authorities, not only because of the conflict and disasters but also due to the demand for water from other sectors (banana farms, agriculture, etc).

A study of governance levels

According to the Water Governance Facility, “Water governance is defined by the political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place, and which directly or indirectly affect the use, development and management of water resources and the delivery of water service delivery at different levels of society” (Water Governance Facility, 2013). Good governance has been widely discussed, and several principles have been agreed on: it should be participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follow the rule of law (GWP, 2003).

In accordance with the 1987 Constitution, the Philippine national government controls the country’s water resources.. The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is the government agency responsible for all of the water resources in the Philippines. It regulates, integrates and coordinates all water-related activity. However, this agency is not the only one involved in Water governance. Lots of institutions, at different hierarchical levels, are active. For example, the Department of Health monitors the quality of drinking water; the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) governs local water districts. Furthermore, several international agencies and institutions are also participating in the governance or overseeing it. So water governance is multilevel, but also multisectoral. The Lessons learned from DFID show that to broaden water access, “there must be some form of overarching policy that drives the service delivery agenda and ensures that there is good coordination between different actors (government, donors and NGOs/private sector)” (DFID, 2005, P4). That is why it is important to study it to understand better how the institutions work in the Philippines.

The analysis of how water governance works at different levels in the Philippines will show how the different bodies influence access to water for the most vulnerable. Even if national government has a good governance policy in terms of delivering basic services, water is always the lowest priority of the national and local developing agendas. The Philippine Water Supply Sector Roadmap is a government initiative which, together with various stakeholders of the sector, addresses the gaps and challenges identified by studies (Aquastat, 2012), but the GLAAS 2012 Report shows that the financial flows within the initiative are insufficient to meet the Drinking-water MDG targets (UN Water, 2012). This is worth noting, when “the WHO findings are that WASH² interventions are ‘highly cost effective’ when compared to other health interventions using standardised measures of US\$ per DALY averted” (The Commission on Macroeconomics and Health considers interventions with a cost-effectiveness ratio of less than three times the national GDP to be ‘cost effective’, and interventions with a ratio equal to or less than GDP to be ‘highly cost-effective’) (DFID, 2012, P5). Furthermore, while the international community aims to widen access to water, through the influence of the MDGs for example, the estimated budget targeted at the poor has made little or no progress in the Philippines (UN Water, 2012).

More precisely, according to the GLAAS 2012, several key fields of governance can be analysed. Those are: the coverage target, policies and institutions, planning, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting and expenditure, participation and equity, human rights, sustainability and human resources capacity of the WASH sector.

Those indicators can be split into urban and rural, and analysed either at national or sub-national levels, showing possible disconnection and transmissions failures. A global analysis from GLAAS 2012 WASH indicators already shows:

- a) Positive indicators in the following fields:
 - a. Water service coverage for the population (87%), hospitals and health care clinics (100%)
 - b. Policies and institutions (poverty reduction strategy, definition of institutional roles, decentralisation process)
 - c. Planning and monitoring system at national level
 - d. Official donors capital commitments utilised

² WASH is Water Sanitation and Hygiene, the standard acronym of the sector

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- e. Funding criteria distribution (rural only)
 - f. Recognition of the HRTWS³ in policy laws
 - g. Sustainability of rural WASH infrastructures
 - h. Operation and maintenance mechanisms (urban only)
 - i. Human resources capacity (urban only)
- b) In progress (but not yet delivered properly) indicators in the following fields:
- a. Coverage for primary and secondary schools with basic WASH services (58% and 63% respectively)
 - b. Water service investment
 - c. Consultative process for individuals and communities
 - d. Funding criteria for urban context
 - e. Access to national funds at local/ subnational level
 - f. Complaint mechanisms oriented to rights claiming
 - g. Water points mapping (rural only)
 - h. Operation and maintenance mechanisms, especially human resources (rural only)
 - i. Water scarcity plans (urban)
- c) Stagnating indicators in the following fields:
- a. Sector monitoring (annual review)
 - b. Financial flows sufficient to meet MDG targets
 - c. Targeting of the poorest by WASH budgets especially slum dwellers
 - d. Measuring the impact of equity policies
 - e. Supply chain for spare parts (rural only)
 - f. Water scarcity plans (rural only)
 - g. Performance appraisal and education for the sector's personnel (rural only)

Methodology approach

The 6 month research, conducted by Alix Lerebours, a Master student at La Sorbonne University working with Action contre la Faim, will define to what extent the governance failures hinder access of the most vulnerable to basic water services and make recommendations to improve this.

First there will be a review of existing national and local policies, strategies, laws and budget allocations, plus a mapping of WASH stakeholders' advocacy capacity. This will lead to an analysis of water governance issues and success at national level. Secondly, research will be done at provincial level (North Cotabato area) through focus group discussions and interviews of stakeholders. This will lead to a better understanding of the water governance issues at the subnational level. Finally, a survey of beneficiaries will be conducted to get the perspective of the problem through the eyes of the affected population. Thanks to this information, the links between the diverse governance levels will be determined and analysed.

This research will be conducted from the mission of Action Contre la Faim in the Philippines and supported by ACF HQs. The (in) security issue affecting foreigners (especially connected to kidnapping) in the North Cotabato area may influence the study's field methodology: a remote research approach may be considered by the researcher.

The interactions between water governance infrastructures will be studied to understand the influence of the different governance levels on each other, and on access to water.

The principles of subsidiarity and cooperation, at international, national and local levels will be compared, in order to recommend and develop the most effective actions for increasing access to the water sector for the poor. There has been some progress in the procedures for informing, consulting and supporting participation by the community, but there is no specific provision in the national strategies for slums and informal settlements, and thus for the poor (UN Water, 2012).

Several levels will be analysed: sector budget and expenses, policies and institutions (targets, approved policies and institutional roles), planning and evaluation (investment programme, coordination, accountability and review processes), financial planning and resources (sufficiency of funds, budget transparency, percentage of donors funds used, percentage of domestic funding, equitability criteria and

³ Human right to Water and Sanitation

predictability of funds), human resources (allocation, capacity), transfer of national policies down to local level.

The main steps of the research will therefore consist of:

- a mapping of governance indicators (based on GLAAS / OECD recommendations, as well as interviews of national and international key informants) at national level
- a similar mapping, based on the same indicators, done at subnational level (crosschecked by a field study involving beneficiaries of the water and sanitation sector services)
- the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘transfer mechanisms’ of policies, strategies and means from national to sub-national levels
- a proposition of concrete recommendations (through an advocacy briefing paper), validated by all actors, that could promote better governance, especially for the sector’s beneficiaries

Expected outcomes of the research

The research will come with an advocacy framework and recommendations oriented to the different non-governmental stakeholders in order to promote a coordinated, win-win and assertive lobby based on the access of the poorest to basic water services. It will support governmental structures (national and local level) in identifying factors that could improve service delivery and improve efficiency of the WASH sector’s development.

Following the research, a master thesis and an advocacy briefing paper will be published and shared with all governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies, through a consultation or a report. It will also support ACF missions (45 around the world) in developing their WASH advocacy approach toward sectorial governance.

The results will also be published by Ps-Eau (a French organisation in charge of promoting decentralised cooperation mechanisms in the WASH sector) in a journal disseminated in France at organisational and institutional level.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the ACF-mission in the Philippines, the Advocacy Department of ACF Paris who have funded the research, Dr. Jean Lapegue who is the supervisor of WASH in the Scientific & Technical Department of ACF-France and the University of La Sorbonne in Paris (Prof. Philippe Ryfman), who gave me the opportunity and the support I needed to conduct this research.

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