

CASE INFORMATION SHEET

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UGANDA: Citizens Action for Accountable WATSAN Services in the Slums of Kawempe – Kampala City

As in any country, in Uganda, water and sanitation are fundamental to health and human survival. However, the water sector is not a government priority. In fact, the sector's share of the national budget keeps declining: whereas, in 2004/5, 4.9% of the national budget was devoted to the water sector, this figure has decreased to only 2.8% in 2007/08 and is expected to drop even further.

Given the declining national budget share and political priority of the sector, there is urgent need to put in place measures for effective and efficient utilisation of the available resources in the sector. Improving governance and the fight against corruption in the sector is a requirement if Uganda aims to attain her MDG target of halving the number of people without access to drinking water and sanitation by 2015.

Limited Access to water and sanitation exacerbated by corruption

Kawempe is one of the poorest administrative divisions of Kampala city with a population of roughly 269.000 in an area of only 32 sq Km. It attracts large numbers of people, but does not provide enough water and sanitation facilities. One of the greatest problems for slum dwellers is the huge cost of clean, drinkable water and adequate sanitation. Although no specific study has yet been made to highlight the impact of corruption on the WATSAN sector in the city, its impact is evidenced in the numerous shoddy construction works in a number of WATSAN projects.

For example, in 2008, community-based Public Expenditure Monitors found that 12 out of the 14 latrines constructed in Kawempe division under the Kampala Integrated Environmental Planning and Management Project (KIEMP) were filled with water from underground making them unusable for the community. These shoddy works were a result of mismanagement of project funds. In response, citizens gathered for demonstrations around the facilities to voice their concerns to the media. In so doing, the community exposed corrupt practice and mismanagement in the project to the wider community and demanded that project managers should be held accountable for their decisions. Interestingly, two television channels picked up the news and aired the slum dwellers concerns on prime news.

Project Information

Organisation: **Community Integrated Development Initiatives**
Contact: **James Kiyimba, Project Manager Citizens Action Project**
Email: kiyimbajames@yahoo.com
Telephone: **+256 712 874677**

Further Information:
www.watsanuganda.watsan.net/page/121

Citizens' Efforts in the Slums of Kawempe

The Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI), a local NGO, in partnership with WaterAid, is implementing the Citizens' Action Project (a WATSAN community led empowerment project) in Kawempe. The objective of the Citizens' Action Project is to enable the urban poor communities to have their voices heard in regard to adequate water and sanitation services from providers and policy makers alike. The project has helped the community to gather information and voice their demands to service providers and local governments, which force them to be more transparent in their service delivery. The case is a rare example in Africa of poor citizens holding their local governments and service providers to account for the service



they render. Through the established Community Monitoring and Evaluation systems at parish level, grass-root communities continuously monitor expenditures on WATSAN projects. They also do value for money audits thereby identifying and exposing where corruption tendencies are. During dialogue with service providers and policy makers, grassroots representatives present their monitoring findings and also make public officials implicated in shoddy works account for their decisions. Failure to do so can mean that the matter is taken to the media. Remember, no public official would wish to be portrayed as corrupt. They tend to come back and rectify the situation or the citizen's actions leads to the central government to take up the issue in question.

Anti-Corruption Strategies

Citizens Action is a community-led advocacy initiative designed to empower urban poor communities to demand for improved access and accountable water and sanitation service delivery. In this citizen's led advocacy approach, the non-governmental organizations, CIDI and Water Aid Uganda, facilitate community engagement with service providers and policy makers. They do not see themselves as mediators on behalf of citizens, but instead provide appropriate training and facilities to help communities develop an understanding about their current water and sanitation service situation. In this process, CIDI has provided resources for community capacity building; organising exchange visits with slum dwellers from Kibera- Nairobi. In addition, CIDI is also facilitating the urban poor through fora where they interface with service providers in dialogue. These meetings between service providers and users not only provide consumer feedback on service access and utilisation but they are very helpful in finding mutual agreements or solutions. As a means of amplifying the voices of the urban poor and marginalised, CIDI catered for the media placements in addition to the publication of a quarterly news letter called Community Voices. Other key project activities include:

Community Resource Mapping and Household Enumeration

→ The community identifies who does and who does not have access to adequate WATSAN services. Based on this information, the community identifies a benchmark for adequate provision, which can be used to negotiate with officials and providers. Collecting information about the real costs and coverage empowers citizens to speak out against unjust provision.

Training and Capacity Building of Communities

→ These community trainings include information about local government planning and budgeting cycles. This allows citizens to participate in planning processes. Through the participation of citizens, more officials and providers are being monitored, which fosters water integrity.

Establishment of Community Based Monitoring and Advocacy structures

→ Communities are encouraged to monitor the implementation of public projects in order to assess value-for-money. It helps identifying shoddy works during project implementation. Moreover, community advocacy groups come together on a monthly basis to discuss community concerns.

“The Citizen's Action project has helped us, the urban poor, to realise that we have the power to bring about positive change and more accountability of our WATSAN service providers and local leaders” Mrs Scott Kiwuka- Tebuyoleka Zone Bwaise Slums

Lessons Learned

Feedback from users about the availability, functionality, quality and costs is crucial to advocate for better services. The urban poor are now more visible in local government planning and media reports.

Establishing information and community data such as digital maps which can be used to hold governments and service providers accountable as well as support evidence based decision making regarding resource allocation.

Establishing a direct interface between WATSAN service providers, policy makers and users helps to find binding solutions.

Through actions and demands for accountability, the urban poor can exert pressure to make their local politicians and service providers account for their decisions.

When poor citizens are mobilised and gain access to information, they have the means to demand accountability, demonstrate and confront corrupt officials.

Dialogue between service providers, local area policy makers and service beneficiaries usually creates a mutual understanding among them in search for solutions.

The media is a very good channel in the fight against corruption because it helps to put the case on the public agenda and also exposes corrupt people.