



**Practical
ACTION**

BETTER DATA

**for needs-based
WASH planning
in Kisumu**

SUMMARY

As Kenya's third largest city, Kisumu has been the focus of much research and data gathering. However, current WASH projects implemented in Kisumu County are not guided by evidence-based data. Many low-income residents remain without access to basic services, while their needs are not prioritized in plans and budgets. Kisumu County lacks a single authoritative WASH data source and systems for collecting, managing, and sharing WASH data in Kisumu are fragmented. There are gaps in data including the ability to disaggregate spatially or by individual characteristics. The culture of decision-making also does not value the use of data. This policy brief calls for coordinated approaches through which data can help steer resources to where the need is greatest. It is based on Practical Action's field experience and research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a County monitoring WASH platform**, maintained by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit of the County Government allowing inputs from multiple agencies and grassroots groups, and easy access by all to the results.
- **Strengthen M&E resources and capacity** to implement and operate a County monitoring platform and dashboard, including the recruitment and training of dedicated monitoring staff. Support the unit on transparency, openness, and public engagement with its findings.
- **Partner County M&E and WASH officials with research actors** through a two-way relationship where research actors are engaged to support the M&E unit to ask the right questions, validate what works, and interpret and apply research findings.

THE NEED FOR BETTER DATA

Decisions are not driven by data.

Current WASH projects implemented by Kisumu County are not guided by a comprehensive sector baseline. This leads to considerable difficulty in prioritizing and planning WASH investments appropriately. In particular, it acts as a barrier to identifying priority areas such as urban low-income or slum areas, and certain poorly served rural areas. In the context of

COVID-19, the lack of evidence has been problematic for quickly and effectively targeting appropriate resources to improve handwashing and access to safe water. Although the County Water Department is in the process of establishing a comprehensive baseline, both the current and the previous County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP)¹ for Kisumu were made in the absence of an up-to-date baseline (Origa, 2019). Annual WASH budgets are typically not informed by a programme performance review and poor tracking of budget expenditure data at project level provides a weak basis to inform subsequent budget allocations (Origa, 2019).

A fragmented picture of WASH outcomes. Kisumu County lacks a single authoritative WASH data source for monitoring WASH outcomes. WASH data in Kisumu is generated from multiple data sources and managed via multiple platforms. As such, local and national sources, systems, and approaches for collecting, managing, and sharing WASH data in Kisumu are fragmented. Comparison between the data sets is difficult and inconsistencies are often compounded by reporting delays, data errors, and losses.

Multiple WASH data sets

WASH actors nationally and locally in Kisumu are using different collection methods, as well as different indicators and indicator definitions. For example, the WASH indicators captured by the Health Information System are not aligned with the indicators reported on by Kenya under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Ofori-Kuma and Gebreyesus, 2019).

Multiple WASH data management platforms

Water service providers enter their own data in the Water Regulation Information System managed by WASREB (Water Services Regulatory Board); however, other WASH data is entered into DHIS2, an online health data management platform, and community-led total sanitation data is entered into a separate national platform supported by UNICEF. Parallel reporting systems make it difficult to consolidate data and compare it over time.

Data gaps. There are various gaps in the data, including agreed universal parameters and indicators for WASH outcomes, disaggregation according to gender, age, and disability, classification in terms of location and how water is supplied in an area (e.g. direct from the Kisumu Water and Sanitation Company – KIWASCO, or from the Master Operator), and whether sanitation is on-site or off-site (sewered). The office of the

County Director of M&E is currently undertaking an exercise to develop a County M&E framework; however, without this level of information it becomes difficult to identify and target priority locations and vulnerable groups for WASH interventions.

Poor data availability. Significant amounts of data are generated in Kisumu but not all the data is shared with the County or others working in the sector. KIWASCO shares its water-

related data on request. There is also a weak culture of data sharing among WASH actors; notable exceptions being the national community-led total sanitation platform and local sharing of data through the Kisumu County WASH forum. While a number of evaluations on WASH have taken place in Kisumu, data sharing and validation remains weak.

THE WAY FORWARD

Data-driven WASH plans are necessary to identify and address programming gaps which will impede the sector's progress. A key priority area of the Kenya Vision 2030 is achieving the SDGs. Under this priority area all ministries, counties, departments, and agencies are expected to report on relevant monitoring indicators. Both the Draft Kisumu County Environmental Health and Sanitation Bill of 2018 and the National Water Act of 2016 require the establishment of information systems for monitoring water and sanitation.

The devolution of WASH service delivery to county-level in Kenya remains an opportunity to strengthen planning and monitoring of WASH services. The way forward includes increasing emphasis on producing reliable data as well as improved M&E capacities in order to increase the reliability, accuracy, and use of data. The following policy measures are intended to improve data-driven WASH planning in Kisumu. They are for the attention of the recently created M&E Unit (in the Delivery Unit) at Kisumu Council as well as WASH partners and decision-makers at county level in Kisumu.

BETTER DATA

and capacity to use it effectively are the key priorities



Installation of new 4.7 km water pipeline in Obunga, 2020

TRACKING PERFORMANCE

of County programmes and budgets is needed – as well as tracking WASH outcomes

Establish a County monitoring WASH platform for WASH outcomes

This platform would be maintained by the M&E Unit of the County Government allowing inputs from multiple sources to populate a combined data set of WASH outcomes. Critically, the platform must adopt an appropriate spatial unit of analysis as well as disaggregation of individual and service access characteristics including gender, age, and disability. It will be important to classify how water is supplied in an area (direct from KIWASCO, or from the Master Operator, etc.) or whether sanitation is on-site (pit latrines and septic tanks) or off-site (sewered).

The County should look to WASH actors to help build the data set. As part of the process of obtaining permission to run a project in the County, agencies should sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the County M&E Unit. This MoU will set out those key indicators from the Council's question bank that the project will align with and to which it will contribute data. Equally, where grassroots groups collect their own data through enumeration exercises, there should be discussions about how their data can be incorporated while ownership of the information remains with the community group.

The County Government should promote widespread sharing of data by adopting the principles of 'Open Data'. This will allow anyone to freely and conveniently access, use, modify, and share WASH data relating to Kisumu County. Data should also be shared

and validated with residents through the Resident's Associations (RAs) and Neighbourhood Associations (NAs). The County Government Planning/M&E Department should work with the RAs and NAs to develop new public participation processes in order to facilitate this.

Strengthen M&E resources and capacity

The County M&E Unit is a critical component in the process of generating effective County investment and development plans in terms both of establishing the baseline and tracking project and programme performance to inform prioritization of resources. This is of foremost importance in the context of COVID-19. To date, tracking programme performance and budget expenditure has not been a priority and needs to be addressed in the next budget cycle. Kisumu County budget should allocate sufficient funds for

establishing and operating the new County monitoring platform and dashboard; the recruitment of new, dedicated monitoring staff including an increased stipend for Community Health Volunteers if they are to be part of the workforce; and recruitment of dedicated M&E staff to the health and sanitation department and the water department. Training and technical support should be provided to these staff on the collection, coordination, analysis, and management of performance data. Additional skills may be needed to boost work on transparency, promotion, and public engagement with the information.

Strengthen partnership for research and development

There are opportunities for County Government and NGOs that provide services to work with various research actors to generate and disseminate new knowledge. This is a two-way relationship where research actors are engaged to help address WASH issues, including formative research to ask the right questions; conduct small-scale randomized controlled trials to validate what works; carry out joint data collection of baseline studies; and work with the M&E Unit and other County officials to interpret and apply research findings.

Boxes 1 and 2 illustrate different research actors and their potential roles. Box 2 shows that grassroots groups are also highly effective researchers. WASH data should be presented in a user-friendly format to the County Health Executive, County Health Teams, and other key stakeholders and decision-

Box 1

School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene plus Community Impact (SWASH+) was a 13-year partnership of CARE, Emory University, and the Government of Kenya to identify, develop, and test innovative approaches to school-based WASH. The partnership conducted a series of rigorous studies in 650 schools across seven Kenyan counties and is an example of evidence-based decision-making for improved WASH outcomes, contributing to increasing school WASH funding and policy changes for WASH in schools (Alexander, 2019).

Box 2

The Slum Dwellers International Know Your City campaign has completed several community-led enumerations including WASH data in specific slum and low-income communities. Partnering with SDI Federation as a research actor would be an extremely valuable way of identifying data gaps and prioritizing WASH interventions in low-income areas. More information at <http://knowyourcity.info/>

makers, with a dashboard linked to the County monitoring platform discussed above. This would provide real-time information on the WASH situation in Kisumu County.

Conclusion

Many low-income residents in Kisumu remain without access to basic services. The lack of a well-functioning data collection and management system means that decision-makers are not fully able to appreciate where the needs are greatest and allocate resources accordingly. In a context

affected by rapid changes through urbanization, climate change, and more recently the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is even more need for up-to-date, accurate, and disaggregated information. The steps suggested would help harness the information that already exists and identify gaps that need filling, to better serve those in greatest need.

Notes and References

1. The CIDP is a 5-year plan prepared by the County Government to provide a framework for development.

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**About Practical Action**

We are an international development organization putting ingenious ideas to work so people in poverty can change their world. Our vision is for a world that works better for everyone.




We help people find solutions to some of the world's toughest problems, including challenges made worse by catastrophic climate change and persistent gender inequality.

We believe in the power of small to change the big picture. And that together we can take practical action to build futures free from poverty.

Big change starts small.

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