

Implementing pro-poor policies in a decentralized context: the case of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Tanzania

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Abstract This paper examines the challenge of achieving a balance between the implementation of centrally designed pro-poor policies and the decentralization of responsibilities to local governments in many African countries. It analyzes the implementation of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Tanzania. Key mechanisms for planning and allocating resources are analyzed at ministry, district, and village levels. Results show that a mixture of policy incoherencies, technical shortcomings and political influence determine that only a small proportion of funds reaches the underserved areas. We argue that a greater connection between the bottom-up and top-down planning mechanisms, and a sharp increase of downwards accountability are needed before decentralized decision-making result in better resources allocation. Meanwhile a bigger intervention from central government is needed.

Keywords Decentralization · Pro-poor policy · Rural area · Sustainability · Water supply · East Africa · Tanzania

Introduction

Sustainability aims at maximizing the well being of present and future generations. As a result of this, the reduction of poverty is one of the concerns of sustainability science (Kajikawa 2008). Poverty cannot be overcome without adequate access to basic services, especially water. But technical or physical problems are rarely the reason for the lack of this service. To a large extent, these are socially and politically induced challenges, defined by the established water governance. This concept refers to the system of actors, resources, mechanisms and processes that mediate society's access to water (Franks and Cleaver 2007). The importance of the institutions for the adequate reduction of poverty has already been highlighted (Auer 2007). Modern institutions in many developing countries are shaped by decentralization processes. For its supporters, decentralization is a means of improving quality of governance by delegating power to local governments, which are assumed to have better information and more incentives than the central government when it comes to responding to local needs and preferences. It is also supposed to decrease corruption and increase public participation and the accountability of public officials, resulting in poverty reduction (Ford 1999). On the other hand, scale literature offers the a priori conclusion that there is nothing inherent about scale, and thus, it does not allow for the assumption that there is something intrinsically desirable about the local scale (Smith 1993; Brown and Purcell 2005). This has been subject to debate especially in political ecology, whereby the "local trap" led some researchers to assume that the key to environmental sustainability is devolution of power to local-scale actors and organizations.

In practice, the literature shows very different effects of decentralization on poverty reduction (Shah et al. 2004;

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OCDE 2005; Steiner 2007; Faguet 2004). The expected outcome depends on existing institutional arrangements and power relations, and on the coherence of decentralization policies in the specific context (Smoke and Lewis 1996). In this sense, inputs from policy science can help to analyze the outputs of proposed policies (Ascher 2007). It is widely accepted that successful decentralization has to do with local government authorities (LGA) being able to take their own decisions and be accountable for them (Shah 1998). But practical implementation of this remains difficult. In many cases, central governments are reluctant to decentralize resources (despite official discourses), and use different mechanisms to retain control (Ribot et al. 2006). On the other hand, when governance is decentralized, local elites are frequently even less likely than national elites to target government resources to the poor (Blair 2000; Crook 2003). Moreover, the fervor of decentralized governments to become financially independent through the collection of local taxes can eventually prevent the rural poor from improving their lives (Ellis and Mdoe 2003). At the same time, the poor are not automatically benefited when resources reach the village. Communities are not always ready to target resources to the poor (Galasso and Ravallion 2005), and the poor are frequently less able and have fewer channels to participate in those community processes that could eventually improve their living (Cleaver 2005; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Hickey and Bracking 2005). This has been attested by the irregular experience of community management of common-pool resources (Songorwa 1999; Blaikie 2006) and water supplies (Cleaver and Tonner 2006; Harvey and Reed 2007; Bakker 2008), which point out the limitations of leaving communities to deal with management of resources on their own.

Hence, the setting of centrally designed pro-poor policies on health or water backed by sectoral funds is a typical example of policy incoherence in terms of decentralization, but these policies can still be successful and appropriate, even when the benefits that stem from bringing governments closer to the people are not fully exploited (Jütting et al. 2005). The challenge is how these policies can coexist with local participation and autonomy (Francis and James 2003).

This paper analyzes the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP) of Tanzania to show evidence of the challenges of implementation of pro-poor policies in a decentralized context. The key mechanisms for planning and allocating resources from the ministry down to the villages are studied. Results of the allocation of resources for the first phase of the RWSSP are shown for four districts. Incoherencies and areas of improvement are assessed in the “Discussion”. Policy inferences are given in the “Conclusions”.

Methodology

Firstly, a brief history of decentralization in Tanzania is presented, together with the main institutional settings related to the water sector. Secondly, the general planning process is detailed. Thirdly, the key responsibilities of each government level (central government, district and village) regarding the allocation of resources in the RWSSP are studied.

Information about the program at national level was obtained through interviews with officials of the Ministry of Water, along with an extensive review of the unpublished and published documents from this Ministry and the Prime Ministers’ Office.

The analysis of the main decision makers for resources allocation at district level was based on field work conducted in four rural districts (Kigoma rural, Same, Iramba and Nzega) between July 2008 and August 2009. Each of the selected districts belongs to a different region. Two of those districts (Iramba, Nzega) had undertaken a water point mapping exercise¹ in 2005 and 2006, and thus had reliable information at district level to allocate projects of the first phase of RWSSP according to the results of mapping. Same and Kigoma rural, had been mapped after selection of those villages and thus the results could not be used for project allocation decisions. Basic data about the districts is given in Table 1.

In each District, interviews were held, particularly with district water engineers (DWEs) and district planning officers (DPLOs). For the purpose of understanding the drivers for resources allocation at lower levels of government, four wards² were selected in two districts (Same and Nzega). We visited one ward with historically low investment in water supply and one with historically high investment in each of the districts (Table 2). Interviews and group discussions were held with elected political representatives at ward, village and subvillage levels, as well as with government officers at village and ward levels. Interviews were also held with random selected villagers. The village plans from the selected wards were examined and discussed with governmental and political leaders at village level. In order to check whether the information collected in the four wards could be representative of the constraints of others, 50% of Same wards selected randomly were also visited, and brief interviews were held with ward governmental officers. The whole exercise could

¹ Water point mapping is an exercise promoted by Wateraid and other international NGOs whereby all water points in an area are located through GPS, and basic information about their functioning status is collected. Information can be displayed through digital maps to facilitate spatial analysis.

² A ward is an administrative division that usually comprises between three and five villages.

Table 1 Basic data about districts involved in the study

District	Region	Date of water point mapping	Population	Coverage of improved water points (%)	Number of rural wards
Iramba	Singida	February 2006	367,036	17	26
Nzega	Tabora	January 2005	415,203	12	37
Kigoma Rural	Kigoma	August 2008	624,092	32	22
Same	Kilimanjaro	September 2006	207,800	47	24

Table 2 Basic data about wards analyzed

Ward	District	Coverage of functional improved water points (%)	Proportion of ward coverage to district coverage	Inclusion in RWSSP first phase
Mwakashanhala	Niega	0	0.00	No
Itobo	Nzega	72	6.00	Yes
Myamba	Same	14	0.30	No
Hedaru	Same	66	1.42	Yes

RWSSP rural water supply and sanitation program

not be deployed in more districts due to financial constraints.

Decentralization in Tanzania

Local government was present in Tanzania even before independence. Its power was eroded during the 1960s as a result of disagreements with elected councillors and a sharp reduction in income due to the abolition of certain local taxes (GoT 2009). In 1972, a decentralization reform was implemented with a view to enhancing popular participation in development from the village level and heightening the role of the party. LGAs were abolished (GoT 1972). Village planning was introduced throughout the country (and is still implemented today) and social services increased rapidly. However, the quality of services remained poor, especially as regards water (Maro 1990), and sectoral ministries became the direct service providers at local level. This period of centralization failed to deliver services and provide local democracy and governance, particularly in the areas of participation, transparency, and accountability (GoT 2005a). LGAs were re-established in the 1980s but it had lost many of its experienced staff members and competencies. In addition, they were under-resourced, with central and sectoral ministries continuing to control finance, staff, and other resources. The current government's decentralization policy was outlined in the 1998 *Policy Paper on Local Government Reform* (GoT 1998), which clearly sets out a policy of decentralization by devolution ('D-by-D'). Devolution refers to a transfer of competencies from the central to distinct legal entities, which should have wide autonomy. The policy is expected

to reduce poverty by improving service delivery thanks to effective and autonomous LGAs.

One key aspect of decentralization in Tanzania has been the difficult relationship between LGAs and elected councillors. Ward councillors, and village and subvillage leaders are the political representatives at the decentralized level. People vote for their subvillage and village leaders in local elections; ward councillors are chosen in national elections. A ward typically comprises three to five villages, and a typical district has between 20 and 40 wards. Ward councillors are the main link between the population and the LGA administration. The most important decision-making space at LGA level is the full council meeting, which takes place at least four times per year and involves the heads of the LGA administration along with all district councillors. Councillors are highly influential due to the country's history of decentralization.

One of the most important aspects of decentralization in practical terms is the provision of funds that are channeled through transfers from central government to LGAs. Transfers in Tanzania are classified under block grants—intended to cover recurrent costs—and development grants. The system of allocating development grants was designed in the Local Government Support Project (LGSP), which provides for a transparent and performance-based system to assign development grants to LGAs. The project includes the Support for Local Government Capital Development Grant System (LGCDG), which has been operational since the 2005/2006 financial year—going from July to June—and introduces two separate grant mechanisms (GoT 2005a): the Capacity Building Grant and the Capital Development Grant. In order to qualify for the Capital Development Grant, LGAs must satisfy a number of minimum conditions

that are verified every year and concern LGA capacities with regard to: (1) financial management, (2) fiscal management, (3) planning and budgeting, (4) procurement, (5) the council's functional processes, and (6) project implementation, monitoring and evaluation capacity.

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program

According to the latest national water policy (GoT 2002), the central government plays the role of coordinator and facilitator in the water sector, while the district level holds the main implementation responsibilities. The approach to service delivery is the so-called demand-responsive approach, DRA: communities should demand, own, and maintain their water services and participate in their design; full operation and maintenance costs are their responsibility, and they have to provide part of the capital costs through cash and kind (World Bank 1998). The main policy implementation instrument is the Water Sector Development Program, whose rural component is the RWSSP. The RWSSP, officially launched in 2006,³ establishes targets for the percentage of the population in rural areas with sustainable and equitable access to safe water: (1) 65% by 2010 (goal set by the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, MKUKUTA), (2) at least 74% by mid-2015 (MDGs), and (3) 90% by 2025. If these targets are to be met, water supply coverage will have to be extended to an additional 33.8 million people during the period 2005–2025. Estimated costs for the rural component (excluding small towns) are of 1,606 million US dollars (MUSD), with 1,465 MUSD for capital investment, 51 MUSD for management and operational support to districts and 17 MUSD for institutional strengthening and development (GoT 2006a).

Aligned with the policy, the key responsibilities identified for each government level regarding the allocation of resources in the rural water sector are presented in Table 3. These will be the aspects analyzed in this study for each governmental level. Wider aspects of rural water governance have been analyzed in other works (Jiménez and Pérez Foguet 2010a).

General planning process

The planning process at District level combines the bottom-up approach, starting at village level, with the top-bottom priorities established at upper levels. The allocation

Table 3 Main responsibilities at different government levels affecting the allocation of resources for the RWSSP

Level of government	Main responsibilities affecting allocation of resources
Ministry of water	Design of the RWSSP Allocation of funds to districts Preparation of guidelines for implementation
District	Selection of targeted communities Preparation of district water and sanitation plan Awareness and demand creation at community level
Village	Bottom-up annual village plan Application for RWSSP projects

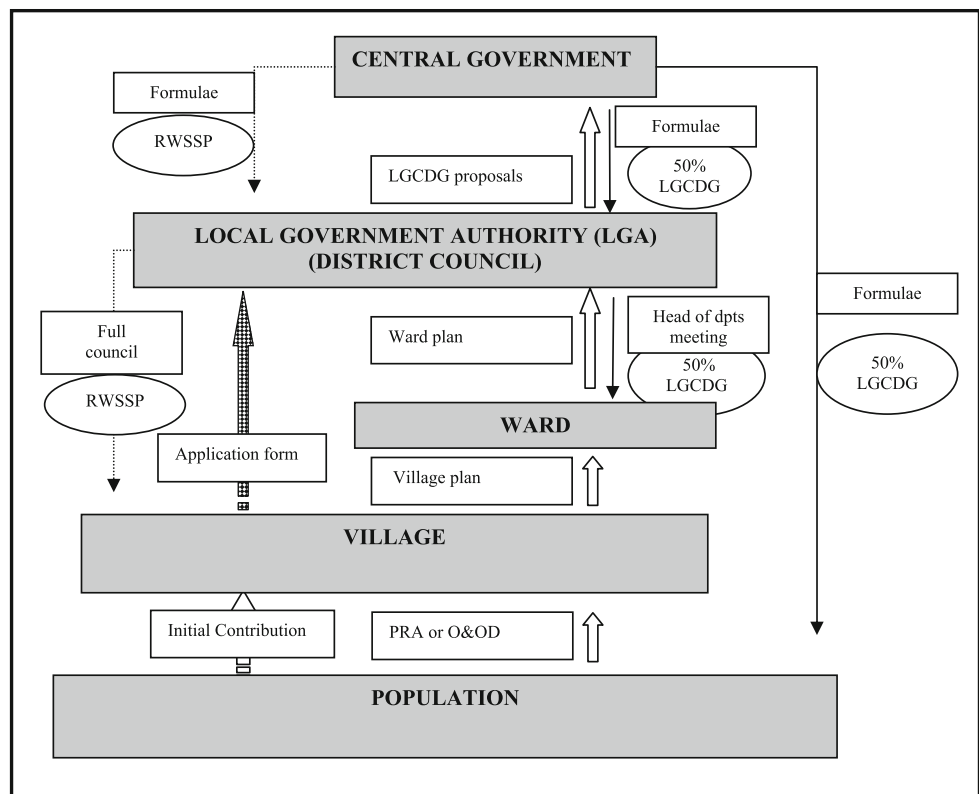
of funds and the processes involved are represented in Fig. 1. Two main cycles are described: the LGCDG and the RWSSP.

The evaluation of the LGA performance during the previous year takes place in September in the framework of the LGCDG and is submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO-RALG). Around November, the ministry issues budget guidelines for the districts. These inform the wards and villages of the given financial and regulatory framework, including indicative planning figures. The priorities must then be developed at the lowest level with participatory planning methods such as opportunities and obstacles to development (O&OD) and Participatory Rural Appraisal. The results of these processes are included as priorities in the village plans, supervised in the Ward Development Committee, reviewed by the district and returned to the village assembly for approval. Every year, the budget, including the foreseen village plans, must be approved in a special public full council meeting by 31 May. The LGA Director then submits the budget to PMO-RALG and the Ministry of Finance, and it is integrated into the national budget approved by Parliament in June. When the final budget is approved, the LGA informs the villages of the final availability of funds.

This participatory bottom-up process is currently linked only to the LGCDG. These consist on average of 1.5 USD per person per year, adjusted according to certain parameters (land in national parks and poverty) and by LGA performance. Fifty per cent of grant allocations are made at sub-district level (through village plans), while the other 50% are decided at LGA level (GoT 2005a). There is no specific procedure for allocating the 50% of LGCDG money directly decided at LGA level. This was confirmed with the interviews made in the districts studied, where funds were normally decided at Head of Department meetings, frequently guided by national directives. Hence,

³ The RWSSP undertook a pilot phase before official launching between 2002 and 2008. Its evaluation was also used in this study (World Bank 2008).

Fig. 1 Mechanisms for allocating LGCDG and RWSSP funds. *Grey rectangles* represent the different actors and levels of government involved. *Circles* Name of the funds allocated, *rectangles* mechanisms to apply for or allocate those funds. *Plain arrows* Local government funds (LGCDG), *broken arrows* water sector funds (RWSSP)



the indicative figures given to villages only apply for 50% of LGCDG funds. In practical terms, villages select one project per year, usually related to social service sectors. Typical projects include building classrooms or houses for teachers, minor rehabilitation of schools or dispensaries, and works on rural access roads. In general terms, LGCDG funds represented 32.74% of total development funds (including water) transferred to districts in 2007/2008 (GoT 2008a).

The RWSSP uses the same system as the LGCDG and allocates development grants only to qualified districts. Out of 132 districts, only 5 failed to qualify for water development grants for the financial year 2009/2010. However, the mechanism is different. The ministry allocates funds to qualified districts according to formulae, and the LGA makes the final selection of beneficiary communities, discussed during the full council meeting. Villages are supposed to apply in advance, open a bank account, and deposit an initial contribution, which is the basis of the demand-responsive approach.

Key aspects at ministry level

The main responsibilities identified at ministry level that affect the allocation of RWSSP resources are: (1) the design of the program, (2) the allocation of resources for its

implementation, and (3) the formulation of guidelines to help LGAs implement the program (Table 3).

Design of the program

At the design stage, increasing equity was one of the underlying principles of the RWSSP (Giné and Pérez-Foguet 2008). This principle was also highlighted in the National Water Sector Strategy, with a specific strategic statement related to the provision of services to low-income groups in peri-urban and rural areas (GoT 2008b). At the design stage, the calculation of costs for each District was based on two general principles:

- Districts with less coverage increase their level of service closer to the national level. In 2005, the reported coverage by district varied from 6.4 to 91.8%. The RWSSP targets that by 2025 all districts will reach the 80–95% range, with an average of 90%.
- Costs are calculated according to the technological options present in each district. Different combinations of technologies were estimated for every district, based on the current presence of technologies, combined with a demand assessment study and the opinion of experts.

Hence, the number of water points needed to attain the desired coverage for every district was calculated and the costs were assigned based on the foreseen technology mix.

Table 4 R^2 of the linear correlation among selected variables at the design and implementation phase of the RWSSP

Variables confronted per district	Design phase	Implementation phase
Development budget versus proportion of unserved population	$R^2 \approx 0$	$R^2 = 0.21$
Development budget per capita versus proportion of unserved population	$R^2 = 0.10$	$R^2 \approx 0$
Development budget versus total number of unserved people	$R^2 = 0.40$	$R^2 = 0.95$

Ten different technology types were considered with their estimated per capita costs and average number of beneficiaries. This technology mix is in fact the main driver for cost calculation: neither the total costs per district nor the budget per capita have any relationship with the initial water coverage per district, as shown in Table 4. There is a slightly better but still not representative relationship between the total cost and the total number of unserved people living in one district ($R^2 = 0.40$). But implementation differs from the design phase, as explained here below.

Allocation of resources

In practical terms, the allocation of RWSSP funds from ministry to district level is driven by formulae based on transparent criteria, which were introduced in 2005/2006.

Three different water budgets are in place: (1) the Development Budget (also named the Capital Development Grant), (2) the Recurrent Budget (also named the Rural Water Block Grant), and the (3) Capacity Building Grant.

The Development Budget can be used for implementing water infrastructures and constructing demonstration latrines. This represents 91.22% of the estimated budget of the program, as mentioned in “[Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program](#)”. The purpose of the recurrent budget is to provide recurrent funding for local water activities, including monitoring local access to potable water and implementing new local water schemes in unserved communities (GoT 2006b); this budget was not included in the design of the RWSSP and depends on the transfers from the Prime Minister’s Office. The Capacity Building Grant funds can be used to support the LGA in creation of capacities, although they also include the logistic support provided to districts through the program (rehabilitation of offices, purchase of vehicles, etc.). We hereby explain the allocation of funds for each budget.

Development budget

The proportion of unserved population living in one district compared with the total unserved population in the country is taken as the parameter for allocating funds. This represents a major shift between the intended goal and the implementation of the plan, since the largest groups of unserved people will be targeted, thus losing territorial

equity. There is a good relationship between the overall number of unserved people living in a district and the money allocated to it ($R^2 = 0.95$, Table 4), but not between the money allocated and the coverage rate by district ($R^2 = 0.21$).

Recurrent budget

In the recurrent budget, priority is given to underserved areas (90%) and 10% is allocated on the basis of equal shares, by which all urban and rural councils receive the same amount (GoT 2007). Recurrent transfer allocations are affected as well by ‘hold harmless’ provisions, which ensure that no district receives less funding than the previous year (GoT 2008d). The formula outcome is also adjusted to ensure that the increase of funds for a particular LGA does not exceed 25%. An excess of funds is distributed partly to keep needy LGAs harmless (GoT 2006c). According to the 2008/2009 ceilings for other charges (total recurrent budget minus personal emoluments) for the four districts studied, the allocated amount is between 4.2 and 8.4 euro cents per person per year, and the average for rural councils is 5.9 euro cents (GoT 2008d). This is the investment assigned for the annual supervision, monitoring and support of water services in rural communities. The block grant also pays the recurrent costs of the urban water supply, when applicable. The Prime Minister’s Office allows for exceptions when they are requested and adequately justified by the districts (GoT 2007).

Capacity development grant

As regards the capacity development grant, the same amount is allocated regardless of the district. Predictions are that districts will receive yearly an average amount of 22MTZS (around 12,500 euros) during the next three financial years (GoT 2008a).

Formulation of guidelines

The Water Sector Development Plan (WSDP) comprises a main document of 238 pages plus 19 annexes, 15 of them devoted to the RWSSP. Altogether, they amount to over 1,500 pages. As a result, information is repeated in several parts, and there are contradictions that lead to confusion in

Table 5 Criteria for appraisal of communities' applications expressed in the Water Sector Development Plan (WSDP) documents

Reference document	Criteria (need)	Other criteria
Project Operational Manual (page 24)	Low coverage High incidence of disease	Willingness and ability to pay Deposit in bank Efficiency
District Operational Manual (pages 4–1)	Water as a priority Vulnerability to disease	Form water committee Raise commitment fee Open bank account
Modular training for DWST (page 35)	18 criteria given for illustration, focusing on accessibility, vulnerability to disease and organizational capabilities of the community as applicable	

Table 6 Scope, duration and criteria for prioritizing communities given by the Ministry of Water for the formulation of the district water and sanitation plan (DWSP)

Reference document	Scope of the DWSP	Duration of the DWSP (years)	Criteria given for inclusion in the DWSP
Project Operational Manual (page 25)	Community subproject proposals already approved	1	No
Guidelines for Operating District Water and Sanitation Grants (page 16)	Community subproject proposals already approved	1	No
District Operational Manual (pages 3–7)	Detailed outline of intentions of districts, with first year more detailed	3	Yes, indicative list Not ranked
Modular Training for District Water Sanitation Teams (page 69)	Not given	Not given	No criteria Examples

some aspects. Knowledge of the plan at LGA level is limited, and there is a lack of precise information on some key areas. This point analyzes the information given for two key aspects related to the allocation of resources at LGA level: (1) the appraisal of community applications, and (2) the preparation of the district water and sanitation plans (DWSP). The indications given in the annexes of the WSDP are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

The selection criteria for appraisal of community projects are given for illustration and listed in various documents. The Project Operational Manual (GoT 2006d) and the District Operational Manual (GoT 2005b) name criteria to be adopted in terms of needs, but the existence of an account with money is stressed as a precondition for appraisal of the proposal. The Modular Training for District Water and Sanitation Team (GoT 2006e) has specific handouts for weighting, ranking and prioritizing communities. Many (18) sample criteria are proposed, with greater importance given to a community's needs and vulnerability than to demands expressed in cash. No indications are given regarding the relative importance of each criterion.

The DWSP is supposedly the district's key short- and medium-term planning document, but the RWSSP documents contain some contradictions when referring to it

(Table 6). In the Project Operational Manual, the DWSP is a consolidation of the approved Facilities Management Plans, i.e., community subproject proposals, and has a 1-year duration. The same approach is repeated in the Guidelines for Operating District Water and Sanitation Grants. In the District Operational Manual, the DWSP is a detailed outline of what the district wants to achieve in terms of developing water supply and sanitation, and it should generate a 3-year rolling district development plan as well as the first annual plan. It should also be developed on a collaborative basis with all stakeholders. Prioritization factors are suggested as indicative rather than in a weighted or ranked manner. Finally, the annex designed to train the District Water Sanitation Team provides examples of training strategies (starting with the most accessible areas, promoting demand in less served areas, promoting equity, etc.).

Key aspects at LGA level

As mentioned above, the RWSSP foresees that the LGA is the focal point for decentralized implementation, with a pivotal role to play in promoting demand at the community

level, planning, providing support and monitoring the implementation of community projects (GoT 2005b). The main activities influencing the allocation of resources at this level are the selection of communities, the elaboration of a DWSP, and the promotion of awareness and demand in the communities (Table 3), as analyzed below.

Selection of beneficiary communities

The selection of villages that will benefit from the first phase of the RWSSP was not rigorously recorded in any of the cases studied. The criteria that were found to be influential were as follows:

- The demand-responsive approach as a key policy principle. In practical terms, the demand is evaluated through the total cash contribution made by villagers and deposited in a bank account. Relative measures, such as contribution per capita, were not considered. Hence, more populated and well communicated villages (with easier access to the bank offices located in the District town) had bigger chances to fulfill the demand criteria.
- Vulnerability to disease and lack of access to water were named as criteria for assessing need. However, comprehensive information by village or ward was not readily available in any of the districts, which made it difficult to apply the criteria in a rigorous way. DWEs recognize that the data used are not based on an extensive review of the situation, and this is confirmed by the difference found in some studies between the official coverage and the water point mapping studies for the same year (Jiménez and Pérez-Foguet 2010c). Inter-annual variability is also very high; for instance, from 2007 to 2008, 30 districts reported a coverage variation of at least 10% on the previous year. Of these, 16 reported a variation of over 20%, and seven reported one of over 30% (GoT 2008c). Moreover, there was weak coordination with health departments to confirm the vulnerability of certain areas to water-borne diseases. The existence of cholera outbreaks in previous years was the only indicator that seemed to influence decisions.
- The influence of both national and local level politicians; firstly, it was frequently stated that in the allocation of projects, a balance had to be made between the constituencies of the district, represented by members of Parliament at the national level; this aspect was confirmed in all cases, as explained in “[Selection of projects for the first phase of the RWSSP](#)”. Secondly, LGA officials stated that ward councillors tried to play an influential role in the decision-making process by lobbying them. This process seem to be effective.

In both Districts visited, wards with historically very low investment in water had difficult communications with district town, and councilors declared to travel to District capital only when strictly necessary. On the other hand, over-served wards were in both cases close to District capital. Ward councilors visited regularly the LGA and were familiar to LGA officials.⁴ As explained above, the selection of projects must be discussed with ward councillors at the full council meeting.

Additionally, the districts’ technical staff reported a lack of tools and information for discussing the project allocation criteria with politicians. DWEs argued that the total amount of funds in a bank account was a simple criterion for defending the choice of communities, and thus, was the most commonly used.

Elaboration of a district water and sanitation plan

None of the District Water Departments that were visited had a clear idea of the scope, duration, and criteria for making a DWSP, or of their role in it. The DWSP will be outsourced to external contractors for the first phase of the RWSSP. The aim of the DWSP document is to guide the second phase of the RWSSP, defining the priority villages of each district for the coming years.

Awareness creation at community level

Awareness creation activities regarding the procedures and mechanisms of the RWSSP were not undertaken regularly at community level in any of the districts studied. Only pre-selected villages were visited to obtain additional data and inform them about the procedures for completing the application forms.

In one of the four cases studied, an annual meeting was summoned in the district’s main town to inform village and ward representatives about the RWSSP procedures. No follow-up of the effectiveness of those meetings was being done.

Key actions at village level

The development of an annual village plan and the completion of the stipulated application forms are the main actions implemented at village level that might affect the allocation of resources for the RWSSP.

⁴ In one case, the ward councillor was seen by the researchers twice in the same week in the Local Government premises. No official meeting with councillors was being held on those days.

Table 7 Analysis of RWSSP-selected projects by ward compared with district coverage

Name of District	Number of villages selected	Available WPM data at the time of selection of RWSSP projects	% of projects in wards in bottom half of coverage ranking	% of projects in wards below average ward population	% of projects in wards badly communicated with District town
Iramba	10	Yes	60	30	40
Nzega	10	Yes	10	30	30
Kigoma	10	No	60	60	40
Same	10	No	50	60	50
Average	10		45.00	45.00	40.00

WPM water point mapping

Annual village plan

Village leaders are largely familiar with the general planning process and respectful of the bottom-up approach. Village plans were prepared in all the villages visited. However, village leaders were not aware of any funding mechanisms other than their share of the LGCDG. Village plans were drawn up considering only the available LGCDG budget, and village priorities were sometimes changed if they were too expensive for the available funds. For instance, one of the studied villages changed their priority from a water project to the building of a classroom because villagers were told that no funds were available for the initially selected priority. Village leaders also reported that their plans were influenced by national directives, including the construction of schools and dispensaries. Another case was found that confirmed this statement. The quality of the planning processes undertaken at village level was variable, in both methods and participation. They ranged from brief meetings with very little participation to full opportunities and obstacles to development (O&OD) processes with external facilitators that last several days. These cases were few, and were externally supported by international donors or done as pilot examples in some Districts.

RWSSP application forms

We found little knowledge in the villages visited about the RWSSP selection procedures. Leaders felt that “winning” projects had to be done in the political arena, rather than through stipulated application forms. The opening of a bank account, and especially the management of the initial contribution was seen as a difficult task to accomplish. Past experiences of misuse of funds were very frequently named and are behind people’s reluctance to contribute. This is also confirmed by the evaluation of the pilot phase of the RWSSP: community initial contributions have been below the required amounts and embezzlement of funds is prevalent in the systems currently operating of the three

districts studied (World Bank 2008). Villagers were ill-informed of decision processes at district level. Minutes of full council meetings or notices regarding the RWSSP project selection were not found in any of the villages visited.

Selection of projects for the first phase of the RWSSP

The analysis of the key processes affecting resource allocation was contrasted with the already selected projects for the first phase of the RWSSP in the four districts studied. The results are discouraging (Table 7). Out of the 40 projects (10 per district) allocated in the 4 districts studied, only 45% were in wards in the bottom half of the district coverage ranking. On average, Districts that had more reliable information (available water point mapping data for the selection of villages) did not use it better than the districts that did not have this information. Additionally, projects were given with preference to relatively more populated wards (only 45% to wards below average). Communications with the district town played an important role, since only 40% of projects were allocated to wards that were not along or close to main district roads. The balance of projects allocated to different political constituencies was respected in all cases.

Discussion

First, it must be highlighted how bottom-up and top-down planning follow unconnected paths. Village planning, which is well-established and performed yearly throughout the country, receives only a small fraction of development funds (32.74% in 2007/2008), and only half of these are used to implement villagers plans. Hence, villagers just rank their priorities considering the national directives for that year and the kind of actions that can be covered with the available budget. Though it is an exercise that contributes to the social and political construction of the

Table 8 Summary of weaknesses for the improvement of resources allocation in the RWSSP

Internal weaknesses	Level of government	External limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of development funds maximizes number of beneficiaries, but not equity • Recurrent budget insufficient and poorly distributed • Capacity building budget is not giving additional support to weak districts, and there is a lack of a structured offer to use the funds • No clear guidelines have been drawn up for selection of communities or future planning 	MoW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurrent budget is not considered in the design of the RWSSP and depends on the PMO-RALG • Lack of reliable source data at district level for allocating funds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash is taken as the key criterion for selecting communities • No regular data collected on the situation of water services at village level • Though awareness creation at village level forms part of the RWSSP project cycle, it is not seen as a priority 	District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No guidelines available for prioritization of communities • Lack of tools to balance political influence • Not enough recurrent budget to undertake regular awareness activities • They procedures to apply for RWSSP projects are not known
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of accountability and information given to villagers • Variable quality of village planning processes 	Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village plans are done considering only a part of the available funds • Sound management of initial contribution is a challenging task without facilitation and support

village, it is very limited in scope and quality. Villages and councillors are not sufficiently aware of other funding mechanisms for development (education, agriculture, water, etc.). Moreover, those funding mechanisms are not feeding their priorities from the point of view of village planning. In the case of water, village priorities set up in their community planning process are not used as a source of information for the selection of villages. Moreover, only already pre-selected villages are being supported by the LGA to complete their applications and make initial contributions. Information also fails to come down: villagers are ill-informed of application procedures and decision-making processes.

Hence, the allocation of water funds is following a top down approach, that undergoes two steps (from Ministry to District, and from District to selected villages). The analysis at various levels (Ministry, District, village) showed internal weaknesses and external limitations regarding the implementation of intended pro-poor policies at each level, as summarized in Table 8. By external limitations we refer to those issues whose solutions are beyond the capacities of that particular actor. Evidently, given that the different levels are interconnected, weaknesses at one level result in external limitations at other levels.

The overall objective of the program is to achieve an equitable increase in access so that all districts have

between 80 and 95% of water coverage by 2025. Nevertheless, there have been important changes as regards the implementation of development fund allocations, which represent over 91% of total funds. The main driver of allocations in practical terms is the total number of unserved people living in a district, with a slight influence of technology. Thus, the main focus of the program has shifted from territorial equity (preference to districts with lower coverage) to targeting districts with the highest number of people without access, which in turn result in a preference for highly populated areas.

The water block grant (recurrent budget), intended to provide funds for recurrent costs, is allocated based on the unserved population living in a district. Support and supervision of community management and awareness creation should be regularly scheduled and common to all districts. This would be aligned with the intention of increasing equity at the sub-district level, as well as assisting communities to keep services operational. Thus, it is believed that the total population, combined with the size of the district, should determine the allocation of these funds. The level of functionality rates of water points could also be considered as a factor.

Additionally, the amount of funds dedicated to these actions should be increased considerably from the current figure of 5.9 euro cents per person per year. Limitations for

management at community level are well known, hence Districts should take a more important role in supporting local management of services. Proactive measures to support weaker communities so that they can organize and fulfill the policy should be planned with these funds; otherwise, local power relations tend to reproduce.

The capacity building grant is allocated equally to all districts. Districts with lower coverage require greater support during the initial steps of the program in order to secure future investments (Jiménez and Pérez-Foguet 2010c). Additionally, there is an urgent need to facilitate structured capacity building for all stakeholders to make a sound use of these funds. Some DWEs reported that they face difficulties in spending the part of the grant of pure capacity building (around 3,000 euros per district in 2009) in a sound manner. The development of the Strategic Framework for Capacity Development in the Water Sector in Tanzania (GoT 2008e) is a first step that needs to be linked to budget and implemented down to a decentralized level.

There are no clear guidelines on the selection of communities or the elaboration of a DWSP at LGA level. Project selection criteria are loose and no indications are given on their relative importance. This has resulted in a narrow interpretation of the demand-driven approach (turned into “cash-driven”) and poses the risk of facilitating political influences. In addition, the absence of reliable information on the situation at village level undermines the possibility of better resource allocation at all decision-making stages. The study also showed that the existence of this information per se is not enough (districts with better information did not target beneficiary communities any better), and additional processes need to be made before it can influence LGA priorities (Jiménez and Pérez-Foguet 2010b). In fact, district councils allocate projects based on a combination of need, demands (expressed in cash) and political influence. This tends to help bigger villages that are better connected and more influential, thus perpetuating existing inequalities. Moreover, this situation is not counterbalanced by regular awareness creation and facilitation in villages that are less organized or have worse connections. The DWSP may be an excellent opportunity to direct the RWSSP effort towards places in need. However, at present the risk of not taking this chance is high, as district officials do not have a clear picture of priorities and work has been outsourced to consultants without specific criteria and participation mechanisms to be followed everywhere.

Conclusions

Responsibilities regarding the delivery of social services have shifted many times in Tanzania over the course of its

history. The success of policies may have as much to do with a coherent implementation of proposed institutional arrangements than with the model itself or the scale at which main responsibilities must be taken.

Despite the existence of bottom-up planning process, this is still quite limited in scope and disconnected from important sectoral funding mechanisms, e.g., for water. Water funds undergo a top-down allocation that does not feed from village plans. In this context, a few recommendations can be extracted from the study. A common condition of every institutional setup concerning water would be to respect the principle of a right to water, which involves the target of achieving universal access and raising governmental responsibility for putting procedures for non-exclusion, non-discrimination and participation in place. These principles are recognized by the Tanzanian government in several documents but they are not easy to implement. Main financing, allocation of funds, and responsibility for overall results of the RWSSP are at ministry level, while implementation relies on district authorities. Villagers are responsible for making the request and for co-designing, co-implementing and operating services. This institutional setup requires major top-down support to village level, which is not fully reflected in the design and implementation of the RWSSP.

The allocation of funds from the ministry level to the districts is quite transparent and follows reasonable criteria, but it is too focused on the development of new infrastructures, while recurrent budget remains far too small and hinders the supporting role of government at district level. The adequate channeling of funds encounters a number of obstacles at decentralized level, where the political influences and the lack of accountability tend to reproduce already existing inequalities. Hence, a bigger intervention of central level is required if the objectives are to be achieved. As regards resources allocation, the improvement of territorial equity at district level should become an explicit target of the program and be effectively included at all stages of its implementation. National directives could be given on a minimum level of service per ward and village, as occasionally occurs with other social services. This somehow undermines the decision of local authorities but may be effective as regards the ultimate goals of the program. The annual evaluation of the LGAs is a powerful mechanism that could be used to include additional performance indicators and give incentives accordingly.

The integration of different planning mechanisms together with much greater downwards accountability would be needed before benefits from decentralized decision-making can become true. This is a long process at the heart of the institutional and political culture of any country. Meanwhile, central governments must ensure that the delivery of social services reaches those in need.

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