

HOW TO REDUCE FAILURE IN THE ZIMBABWEAN WASH SECTOR

Discussion with Zimbabwean frontline water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) professionals resulted in the following context-specific findings and recommendations that may help to address the challenges of learning from failures in Zimbabwe's WASH sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Create cross-organisational platforms for sharing:** Participants would like to see in-person organised forums for discussion of challenges and failures, but there are no existing channels to support this.
- 2 Improve coordination between organisations:** In-person forums for different stakeholders from grassroots to the national level would promote sharing between organisations that could lead to better coordination. It is important that government stakeholders are engaged in this.
- 3 Change the role of the funder:** As government institutions do not have the capacity to carry out their role in the sector, other organisations need to hold NGOs and donors to account for service provision. Social auditing can allow users a voice to identify failures between what has been promised by government and what has been delivered.

KEY FINDINGS:

Insufficient capacity: A culture of donor dependency and minimal government investment exists in the WASH sector. This has weakened government institutions as they do not have the capacity to carry out their duties in the sector.

Poor coordination and communication: Often in relationships between WASH actors there is poor coordination, from national to grassroots levels. This results in confusion leading to tasks being overlooked.

Politics and bureaucracy: Bureaucracy and a focus on projects that 'look good' politically has fuelled corruption in the WASH sector. In Zimbabwe, the result is usually poor prioritisation of projects and a failure to address the needs of beneficiaries.

Inadequate community engagement: When community engagement is inadequate, the implementation of projects is often inappropriate for the context, such as solar powered systems, which communities cannot afford to maintain due to high cost of replacement parts.

Idealistic planning and a 'project mentality': Due to poor policy implementation in the sector, WASH projects are not embedded in ongoing operational activities. There is often insufficient time or budget to ensure project sustainability after initial funding has ended.

Want to know more?

This country-specific brief was produced as part of the research project 'Amplifying Local Voices to Reduce Failure in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector', funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering as part of the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund. You can read about the project methodology and overall findings in the main research brief, available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23785.01127>

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