

Hand Pump Mechanics Associations

Improving rural water service delivery

BRIEFING
NOTE

APRIL 2012

Introduction

This briefing note is the result of action research jointly carried out by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre/Sustainable Services as Scale (Triple-S) and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, to support the functionality thematic group with the implementation of Undertaking 8. Under the action research, SNV and IRC/Triple-S together with some involved stakeholders analyse the process and issues that are encountered during the implementation of the Undertaking. These learnings are translated into action for improving the initiative.

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to specifically provide information on the process of forming HPMA, the challenges faced and possible strategies for mitigation. The information and findings shared in this briefing note are based on a limited number of interviews and work carried out supporting the secretariat of the functionality working group and does not reflect all views and issues surrounding the roll-out of the HPMA.

Background

Functionality of rural drinking water facilities has remained stagnant in Uganda at around 80% over the past years. However, a study carried out in 2011 on the effectiveness of the Community Based Management System (CBMS) in Uganda revealed that full functionality of the water supplies stands at only 53% with around 24% being partly functional with some problems including quality and quantity. Five (5%) of the water sources are functional during the rainy season and 18% are estimated to be non-functional. With a coverage rate of 65%, this implies that only about 35% of the rural population of Uganda have reliable access to safe drinking water.

The 2010 Sector Performance Report identifies poor Operations and Maintenance (O&M) practices and

functioning of the Community Based Maintenance System (CBMS) as the main issues affecting functionality of rural water supplies. The following elements were identified key to improving functionality. These include; the supply chain for spare parts; the role of Hand Pump Mechanics (HPMs) in CBMS; and, the role of Water and Sanitation Committees (WSCs). To strengthen the role and position of the HPMs in CBMS, the Joint Sector Review 2011, emphasised the roll out of HPMA vide Undertaking 8, which targets the formation of Hand Pump Mechanics Association (HPMA) in 80% of the districts in Uganda by June 2012 and having them operational in at least 30% of the districts by June 2013.

The formation of HPMA (Hand Pump Mechanics HPMA) is an undertaking for the rural water subsector agreed upon during the Joint Sector Review of 2011. With the promotion of this new player in the sector it is hoped that the gap in the O&M support system of water users struggling to mobilise assistance when their water point is broken, can be filled. IRC/Triple-S is supporting the secretariat of the functionality working group, which has been tasked by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) to lead this undertaking.

The HPMA should strengthen the position of the individual Hand Pump Mechanics (HPMs) by providing them opportunities for training, improving their access to the market (as association), while providing the water users and the water service authorities with better quality O&M services.

Why Hand Pump Mechanics HPMA in Uganda?

A 2009 study carried out by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation found that 50% of the WSCs have difficulties contacting a HPM in their area when their source breaks down.



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An earlier 2007 study by SNV already identified the following key issues affecting the performance of HPMs. These include:

- **Existence of HPMs as lone operators:** Because they operate individually, they have little opportunities to learn from each other and are not represented as stakeholders in the districts or at any fora. Limited communication therefore exists between WSCs, HPMs and the district water office (DWO; making it difficult to hold
- **HPMs accountable to both the WSCs and DWO;** limiting HPMs access to work. Due to lack of oversight of the HPMs, complaints about misbehaviour; theft of spares; are not addressed; damaging the overall reputation of the HPMs.
- **Access to spare parts:** The HPMs have difficulties in accessing quality spare parts, tools and knowledge. As individuals, they rely on local shops and they cannot benefit from economies of scale, which increases the costs of these spare parts. They have limited access to tools, financial services, subsidies and knowledge. All these impact negatively on the price of repairs and compromises the quality of their work
- **Legality of HPMs:** HPMs lack a legal basis and can therefore not obtain official contracts given out by the Local Government (LGs) for rehabilitation of water sources. The districts therefore often contract companies outside the district to carry out major repairs. This undermines the business of the HPMs and increases the costs of the rehabilitation.

Based on these findings, a concept for Hand Pump Mechanic HPMAs) was developed and piloted in Adjumani district. Based on its successes, it was scaled up to 5 districts in 2009. During the roll-out, a very vibrant HPMA was formed in Kibaale district in 1996 and successfully addressed many of the issues raised by HPM. The Kibaale HPMA was then used as consultant for peer-to-peer learning for other HPMAs. By 2010, HPMAs had been formed in the districts of: Kibaale, Jinja, Kaabong, Kyenjojo, Kasese, Arua, Yumbe, Adjumani, Mpigi and Kiboga.

The formation and operationalisation of HPMAs has led to several positive results such as improving access of HPMs to spare parts, improving information flow between WSCs and HPMs, reporting functionality of water facilities and in supporting DWOs in conducting major repairs for water sources. This has contributed to increased functionality of water sources, in particular the boreholes in the districts.

DWOs support formation of HPMAs

In Kabarole the DWO is strongly motivated to make the HPMA a success. He affirms that, once the HPMA is up and running it will assist him in monitoring the performance and functionality of water sources. **“We will see much less WSCs coming to our office with complaints about the source and will not have to run after each and every water source with a problem. We will be able to focus more on monitoring and supervision of O&M as we are supposed to.”**

The DWO has also supported the Kabarole HPMA registration (including financial support) as CBO and as a company. The company as a commercial arm of the association is a prerequisite for survival of the association, according to the DWO. He thinks the association will not be able to survive as business on only the works that come from the WSCs and the DWO alone. They will need to attract assignments from the market as well.

Another area of support the DWO has rendered during this start-up phase is capacity building in the form of helping to formulate the constitution and elections for the executive committee of the HPMA. He also provides space in the office, secretarial services and the association can use the computers of the office when needed. During next FY 2012/13 focus will be on: developing proposals for work; an analysis by the HPMA of common problems with the water sources and a strategy to address them (e.g. aim for 100% functionality in one sub-county and then move to the next one); and, capacity building on business development and manage-



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The Water and Environment Sector Performance Report (SPR), 2010, shows that Kabong HPMA in partnership with the Kabong DWO and OXFAM contributed towards improved functionality of water sources from 20% in 2006 to 96% in 2010. Based on these experiences, the sector decided to set up the HPMA concept in all the districts in Uganda.

HPMAs - focus of Undertaking 8

The implementation of Undertaking 8 is spear-headed by MWE with support from the Technical Support Units (TSUs). The MWE and TSU6 for example organised a sensitisation meeting in November 2011 where all District Water Officers (DWOs) were invited together with a number of Community Development Officers (CDOs) and HPMA at a central location. During this meeting the rationale behind the Undertaking was explained and the DWOs started the work of formation of the HPMA in their districts. Promotion of the HPMA varies across the districts, however much of its success currently is still largely dependent on the DWO. In Kabarole for example, the DWO has engaged himself personally with the process and supports the development and the growth of the association directly as described in Box 1 above. By April 2012, at least 70 districts had established HPMA.

The MWE concept note on the formation of HPMA recommends that the HPMA are to be registered as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), but all three DWOs that were interviewed in the Rwenzori region (Kabarole, Kasese and Kyenjojo) supported the dual registration: as a CBO with a company and as a commercial arm.

The support provided by the DWO to the HPMA has also varied across districts. In Kibaale, Yumbe and Kaabong districts, the support to the HPMA has been in the form of provision of tool kits, award of contracts for rehabilitation of boreholes, monitoring of the performance of boreholes and contributions towards the operational costs of HPMA. The differences in the approaches of the formation of the HPMA and support

are attributed partly to the lack of a guideline for the DWOs on how to engage and support the HPMA. But also because in some districts there is already a history with an association, which makes the (re)start or revival of the HPMA a different process.

During the first 6 months of implementation of Undertaking 8, focus has been mainly on starting up the HPMA and much less on the roles and capacities of the other stakeholders involved. MWE has developed a framework as detailed in Table 1 that defines most of the roles when the HPMA are fully operational.

Less thought has been given so far on the roles of the different stakeholders during the mobilisation phase, which lasts up to the moment the association can manage its affairs. The DWO of Kabarole mentioned for example that sub-counties are still weak in the supervisory role and have little awareness about the overall concept. The chair of the HPMA in Kabarole expressed need for more guidance from the TSU (the ministry) on the way forward. It is also clear that further roll-out and operationalisation of the HPMA will require a lot of support from the different stakeholders, particularly during the first years of formation of the HPMA.

Undertaking 8 and functionality working group

Undertakings are actions that are prioritised and agreed upon by the participants of the Joint Sector Review, which is held every year in October. In 2011 the undertaking for rural water supply is Undertaking 8: Strengthen the community based maintenance O&M support structures through formation of hand pump mechanics/scheme attendants HPMA in 80% of the districts in FY 2011/12, and operationalising them in at least 30% of districts by FY 2012/13, to improve functionality of rural water sources. The functionality working group has been tasked by MWE to guide this undertaking.

Overcoming challenges

Undertaking 8 is aimed to roll out and operationalise HPMA throughout the country scale. This is not a simple task, given that it relies on the willingness and interest of HPMA to come together to form and sustain the HPMA. An important element of the HPMA is that



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it is a member organisation and depends fully on the motivation of the HPMA. The sector is triggering their interest and stimulating and supporting their formation and growth. It is a scaling-up process that is only 6 months old so far. As new players in the sector, HPMA are being introduced to the sector. Hopefully, the older stakeholders in the sector will welcome them. The formation stage of HPMA has however faced some challenges. Consultations in the field and discussions within the functionality thematic group have revealed some key issues that need to be addressed in the coming months.

HPMA Registration and commercialisation: At the moment two issues that are related to the registration of the HPMA have come up. The first is clarity on legal status of HPMA and how the DWO can engage with them and the second is the commercial operation of the HPMA and its registration as a company.

Regarding the legal status of HPMA, the cooperation framework between District Local Governments (DLGs) and NGOs/CBOs provides guidelines on how to engage HPMA as CBOs but limited awareness on the framework among DLGs continues to cause uncertainty on the legal basis of engaging HPMA. There is need to update the framework and disseminate to all DLGs as part of the DWSCC guidelines for the financial year 2012/2013. Making the cooperation framework operational will require leadership at national and decentralised levels. First of all MWE with support from the TSUs should provide clarity to the DWOs on procedures and conditions for engagement. It is proposed that a MoU between the HPMA and Local Government (LG) and NGOs will address this issue.

On the registration of a commercial arm of the HPMA as a company, the DWOs interviewed expressed preference for this type of registration given its potential to enable HPMA become more financially viable by carrying out work assigned by WSCs, the local governments and from others in the private sector. The MWE conceptual framework, however, does not provide for this dual registration. In Kasese for example, this dual registration is already causing some problems as the exist-

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The DWO of Kyenjojo compares HPMA with Umbrella Organisations (UOs) and says that when the UOs were started, they helped address issues related to the piped schemes. The HPMA will also help to address issues related to rural water sources

ing members of the HPMA do not want to allow new members to become part of the company as well.

Memorandum of Understanding between HPMA and LGs or NGOs:

The MWE concept note on formation and utilisation of HPMA proposes that the DWOs engage the HPMA in conducting rehabilitation and major repairs. For this to work out, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be developed between the LGs and the HPMA stipulating the obligations of both parties. The MWE cooperation framework provides a template that can be adapted for this kind of MoU. NGOs working in partnership with DLGs on operation and maintenance of water sources should use the same MoU to engage HPMA and communities should be informed of their responsibilities therein.



Procurement of tool kits for HPMAs. HPMAs have so far been formed in 70 districts. In principle each sub-county is supposed to have its own toolkit and should agree with the HPMs on how to manage it. The DWOs should conduct an assessment on the availability of tool kits at sub-county level and procure toolkits for such sub-counties if required. The cost of a tool kit is about UGX 2,000,000. Most of the HPMAs will not be able to raise this money to support their members, given that they are still at 'budding' stage. The MWE could consider authorising districts that have functional HPMAs to support procurement of start up tool kits through the DWSCC. In addition, the MWE could consider providing clear specifications for the toolkit given that the different types of pumps for example require different sets of tools. The MWE could restrict the pump types used in the district so as to simplify O&M. A plan is required on how the procurement of toolkits will be phased to ensure that the HPMs and the HPMAs formed are not hampered in their work by lack of toolkits.

Capacity building of HPMAs and involved stakeholders:

To make the HPMAs partners in the provision of safe rural water sources, capacity building of the associations as well the involved stakeholders is required. Capacity building of the HPMAs should fall in two parts. The first is building the capacity of the executive of the association. This should include; areas of governance, management, and business development and relation management. The latter is particularly important because the association is a member organisation, which is based on trust. The fact that many HPMAs seem to opt for also registering as a company makes governance, management and transparency even more crucial.

The second is capacity building of the HPMs, in terms of skills and new technology. Although trainings and refreshers are provided continuously to HPMs, the demand is still there. HPMs can further benefit when all stakeholders that have to collaborate and engage with the HPMAs know and practice their roles. This is particularly valid for the DWOs and the sub-county WASH officers given their supervisory role. General awareness for the WSCs and political leaders is also required.

Membership of the HPMAs: In principle the conditions for membership of HPMAs are established in the constitutions of the HPMAs. But this is not sufficient guarantee that all processes and issues are dealt with in a transparent way. As in Kasese, in addition to resisting new members to join the company, existing members also resist the membership of scheme attendants because they are better trained and skilled. One of the arguments heard is that they are not HPMs, yet the real reason is that HPMs fear the competition. The following points related to membership need attention:

- Guidance on how recruitment of HPMAs members is done and which criteria should be used
- The role of the sub-county in supporting and overseeing the recruitment process
- Hand pumps are not the only technology in use for rural drinking water services, there are also springs, wells with solar pumps and a fast growing number of piped schemes. This raises the question of the name HPM which needs to be revisited. Proposals include Rural Water Artisans

Financial support to HPMAs: A number of DWOs propose that financial support to HPMAs should be included in the operational budget of the district water office. TSUs could also coordinate this action during the April budget process and advise on all the district budgets. This would include a budget to organise follow-up/awareness meetings with stakeholders and training of the executive committee and the members.

Quality of the triggering process and communication:

Some DWOs feel that the quality of the triggering of the HPMA was not optimal. In Rwenzori for example it was carried out in a central location for all districts, which involved only a few stakeholders. The actual triggering needs to happen at district level, which is the level where the actual HPMAs are formed. Some DWOs have also complained that so far they have never heard of or received the framework, which is supposed to be the guiding document. It is recommended that for the further roll-out of the HPMAs a communication strategy be designed that takes into account the information needs of all stakeholders involved.

TABLE 1.

Level	Roles & Responsibilities	Tasks	
		Management	Operational
Ministry of Water & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate policies associated with the HPMA Develop and formalize guidelines for LGs for engaging HPMA Monitor process of HPMA formation & Operationalization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate training of HPMA
Regional Level Technical Support Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate annual meetings of the HPMA at regional level Ensure that policies associated with HPMA are implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building/strengthening of the HPMA at the district level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise the LG on how to regulate the district HPMA's activities Coordinate the activities of the district HPMA regionally Create platform for experience sharing and capacity building
NGOs/CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate training of HPMA on organizational development Support MWE/DLGs in equipping the HPMA with tools Support the governments in providing financial support to districts for rehabilitation & major repairs 		
District Water Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate Registration of HPMA Facilitate meetings of the HPMA at district level Enter into MoU with HPMA Ensure the HPMA is addressing the functionality needs of the communities Manage the disbursement of spare parts and engage HPMA in major borehole repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation and ensure quality assurance Procure services of HPMA Supervise on-going works of the association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate the activities of the HPMA in the sub-counties Monitor standards of member sub-county HPM's Support HPMA in procuring spare parts Seek opportunities/activities for implementation between LGs, Development partners and CSOs Communicate with Sub-counties engagements with HPMA
District HPMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HPMA to supervise all the sub county HPM and verify their works To procure and stock spare parts. Oversee regular collection of reports on functionality of water sources/facilities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enroll/recruit new HPMA & keep updated register of HPM's in district Support registration of HPMA as CBOs
Sub-county office	<p>THE SUB-COUNTY OFFICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor activities of HPMA <p>THE SUB-COUNTY HPM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out routine visits to the sources Carry out preventive maintenance, Maintain a diary of all water source repairs and costs Ensure full functionality of participating HPM's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervise ongoing HPMA assignments Ensure the respective HPM maintain a hand pump diary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of assignments Deploy and regulate the HPM on assignments
Sub-county HPM			
Village level	<p>Water Source Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate the repair of water sources Plan for the preventive maintenance, Maintain a water source diary Open and maintain financial records for O&M fees. Make payments to HPM in case of minor repair Set byelaws <p>User Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make contribution to O&M funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a diary of the water source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the HPM perform the routine checks Ensure the HPM carries out the periodic maintenance

Source: MWE 2011: Concept note for formation and Utilization of Hand Pump Mechanic HPMA in improving functionality (edited)