Bibliography
"Participatory Water Governance in Africa: Community Management of Rural Water Supply"

Introduction

This bibliography, which is based on a wider systematic review of the literature, presents short summaries of some of the key publications (~1990-2016) on Participatory water governance (PWG) in Africa. The primary focus is on community management of rural water supply for domestic use, but some sources that focus on urban water supply, irrigation, and integrated water resource management (IWRM) have been included where they contribute important insights. Sources are broadly grouped thematically and by date.

PWG has been a core element of water policy in low-income countries for decades. The most common form of PWG is community management, in which a committee of local users takes responsibility for technical and financial management of a water resource (such as a borehole, protected spring, or tap system), usually after it has been developed by a government or aid agency. Proponents of PWG argue that it is both more efficient and more equitable than state-led water governance. Critics suggest that these benefits are overstated and often not sustained, and that PWG has negative social side-effects.

The rise of PWG

While the rise of participatory water governance can be traced back decades, it came to prominence in the 1980s – the UN's "International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade".

Briscoe, J. and D. Ferranti (1988). *Water for Rural Communities: Helping People Help Themselves*. Washington DC, World Bank.

This World Bank policy report noted the slow pace and high cost of improving access to clean water, and argued that "the local people themselves... have the most important role" (p1). It made the case that governments and donors should shift from 'providing and financing' to 'facilitating' water services, and that users should finance and manage water supply themselves. The report is notable for its articulation of the neoliberal case for participation in terms of both 'efficiency' and 'equity'. In the 1990s, participation was formalized in the 'Dublin Principles', and several other World Bank studies bolstered the case for PWG.

International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE) (1992). *The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development.*

This document, known as the "Dublin Principles", was the outcome of a conference that fed into the 1992 Rio World Conference on Environment and Development. It formalised the sector's commitment to PWG with its Principle No.

2: “Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.”

Narayan, D. (1995). *The contribution of people's participation: evidence from 121 rural water supply projects*. Washington DC, World Bank.

This influential World Bank study drew on statistical analysis of evaluation reports from 121 rural water projects in 49 countries, supported by 18 agencies. It found that “beneficiary participation is the single most important factor contributing to project effectiveness” (p.75) – though it noted that women’s participation was still very low. NGO projects were particularly successful: although only 15% of the sample, they accounted for 50% of the most effective projects. The study called for a fundamental change in water sector policy and practice towards greater participation and local ownership.

Sara, J. and T. Katz (1997). *Making rural water supply sustainable: Report on the impact of project rules*. UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program.

Another World Bank report, this useful study asked whether demand-responsive water projects are more likely to be sustainable, using multivariate regression to analyse data from 125 communities participating in 10 projects in 6 countries. Unlike (Narayan 1995), it was based on primary data collected via surveys, interviews and observations. It concluded that demand-responsiveness (defined as involvement in project initiation, willingness-to-pay, and informed choice) increased sustainability. It also found that project rules were applied inconsistently, community leaders often obtained project benefits for themselves, training improved sustainability, quality of construction was critically important, and user contributions were viewed as a tax, not as an expression of demand.

Kleemeier, E. (2000). *The Impact of Participation on Sustainability: An Analysis of the Malawi Rural Piped Scheme Program*. World Development 28(5): 929-944.

This study examined the long-run impact of participation on sustainability, focusing on the Malawi Rural Piped Scheme Program because “no other rural water supply project has ever been so widely praised or so often held up as a model of why and how to do participation right” (p.931). Table 1 on p.932 provides a useful reference list of “standard features of participatory rural water supply projects and their assumed effects on sustainability”. The study highlighted management failings at every level, finding that the smallest and newest schemes were working well, but larger and older schemes performed very poorly. Community groups were found to be “good at making the small repairs necessary to keep water flowing, but poor at preventative maintenance and repairs” (p.942). Kleemeier argued that two things would have improved performance: building smaller schemes, and requiring a cash contribution from users – but did not provide evidence to support this latter hypothesis.

Whittington, D., J. Davis and E. McClelland (1998). *Implementing a demand-driven approach to community water supply planning: A case study of Lugazi, Uganda*. Water International 23(3): 134-145.

This high quality case study of the demand-driven / PWG approach in Lugazi, Uganda, is based on observations, interviews, and group discussions. It found very high household expenditure on water (25% of the population spent $12 or more per month on water), and surprisingly high willingness-to-pay for all water supply options. The paper includes a useful discussion of the dynamics of shifting from a ‘public tap’ to a ‘private connection’ system, noting that during transition many people will prefer to buy water from privately-connected neighbours rather than from public taps, and that if this behaviour is widespread, very few people will want or need to get involved in collective action and PWG.

A critical perspective emerges

In the 1990s, another more critical strand of literature emerged, questioning the 'heroic claims' made for participatory approaches to development, and suggesting that community management tended to reproduce existing inequalities of wealth and power.

Cleaver, F. (1999). *Paradoxes of participation: questioning participatory approaches to development.* Journal of International Development 11(4): 597-612.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork of water resource management, Cleaver argues for greater critical analysis of the concepts underpinning participatory approaches. The article highlights the difficulty of 'crafting' institutions, and observes that simply setting up committees does not automatically overcome exclusion. It critiques the myth of the unitary community, highlights the importance of negotiation and conflict avoidance in communities, and observes that people may influence outcomes without formal participation. Cleaver also notes that participation may entail costs as well as benefits, and emphasises the significance of material resource constraints on participation. The article calls for a 'radical reassessment' of participation, involving a shift in focus away from the 'nuts and bolts' of participatory practice to a more critical engagement with the whole concept.

Cleaver, F. and A. Toner (2006). *The evolution of community water governance in Uchira, Tanzania: The implications for equality of access, sustainability and effectiveness.* Natural Resources Forum 30(3): 207-218.

This case study of the Uchira Water Users Association in Tanzania, based on longitudinal ethnographic research, questions some of the assumptions made about the capacity of local communities to manage service delivery. Although the UWUA was "seen by donors as an ideal example of community-managed water supply" (p211), the authors found that most villagers did not participate, and saw it as a closed group that disproportionately benefited the wealthy. While the vast majority of users agreed that the UWUA had improved water supply, many were concerned about affordability of water, and burdensome communal labour obligations had created considerable resentment. The case highlights tensions between community ownership and professionalism, sustainability and equity, and local governance vs external intervention.

Insights from recent case studies

The debate on participatory water governance remains 'live', several decades after it began.

Schnegg, M. and M. Bollig (2016). *Institutions put to the test: Community-based water management in Namibia during a drought.* Journal of Arid Environments 124: 62-71.

Schnegg, M. and T. Linke (2015). *Living Institutions: Sharing and Sanctioning Water among Pastoralists in Namibia.* World Development 68: 205-214.

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and surveys in seven communities in rural NW Namibia from 2010-14, this study examines how social relations affect the operation of formal sanctions in water management, and how drought conditions influence this. The authors find that social relations (especially kinship) override formal institutional arrangements. Failure to pay water user fees is common, and sanctions are seldom imposed due to social norms; these phenomena are heightened in times of crisis. The study argues that social networks substitute for enforcement rules, enabling institutions to work – but not as originally designed. The paper offers a very readable and convincing analysis of the failure of sanctions, but pays insufficient attention to how water supply keeps working anyway, and whether this is regressive.

Roncoli, C., B. Dowd-Uribe, B. Orlove, C. T. West and M. Sanon (2016). *Who counts, what counts: representation and accountability in water governance in the Upper Comoe sub-basin, Burkina Faso*. Natural Resources Forum 40(1-2): 6-20.

This study explores the evolution of IWRM in the Comoe river basin in Burkina Faso, based on long-term fieldwork including 150 interviews with stakeholders at all levels over 5 years from 2010-15. It traces contestation over access to water between multiple groups – big sugar company, small-scale farmers, rice co-operative, urban dwellers, and pastoralists – and shows how party politics seriously affects policy implementation. Examining the (poor) functioning of the CLE (Local Water Committee) which is the body responsible for negotiating agreement over water allocation, it highlights problems including lack of data on which to base decisions, infrequent/delayed meetings, and lack of representation of less powerful user groups. It concludes that participatory governance is a step forward, but is severely constrained by politics.

Naiga, R., M. Penker and K. Hogl (2015). *Challenging pathways to safe water access in rural Uganda: From supply to demand-driven water governance.* International Journal of the Commons 9(1): 237–260.

This study explores the implications of the shift from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach to rural water provision in Uganda, and asks what the current challenges are. Based on doctoral fieldwork in 2012-13 in one sub-county in one district, it provides a useful detailed description of the community management model (p241). The study takes secondary data on poor performance as a starting point, and explores explanatory factors, including poor maintenance, availability of alternative water sources, gender-based inequality, and difficulty accessing spare parts. It documents numerous problems, and concludes that incomplete and inconsistent devolution has undermined the potential for collective action.

Terry, A., O. McLaughlin and F. Kazooba (2015). *Improving the effectiveness of Ugandan water user committees*. Development in Practice 25(5): 715-727.

The authors report on a research project in Uganda which developed a new handbook for water user committees. Although the research itself is of limited rigour, it includes interesting anecdotal reports of numerous problems with community management, such as "accounts of the misuse of [committee] funds were common" (p721), and clearly identifies the problem of community management leading to conflict.

Koehler, J., P. Thomson and R. Hope (2015). *Pump-Priming Payments for Sustainable Water Services in Rural Africa*. World Development 74: 397-411.

This is a case study of the impact of electronic monitoring of handpump breakdown in Kenya, intended to reduce repair times and increase users' willingness to pay (WTP). The authors assume that user fees are both necessary and a good thing, and do not question the community management model. They find that a ten-fold decrease in handpump downtime led to a five-fold increase in reported WTP. However, the study relies on self-reported data which may be severely skewed by courtesy bias; for example, one-third of water point committees claimed they met once per week, which to practitioners seems very unlikely.

Jones, S. (2011). *Participation as citizenship or payment? A case study of rural drinking water governance in Mali*. Water Alternatives 4(1): 54-71.

Jones uses a case study of three villages in Mali to explore the work of NGOs (especially WaterAid) in promoting local participation in drinking water governance. He finds that despite NGO efforts to stimulate collective community management, water points are in fact managed by individuals, and breakdowns are common: 7 out of the 11 pumps studied were non-functional for several months between May 2009 and September 2010. Jones notes that NGOs are emphasising the 'payment' rather than the 'citizenship' aspect of participation (based on the assumption that user charges are essential to pay for repairs) – but without success.

Mandara, C. G., C. Butijn and A. Niehof (2013). *Community management and sustainability of rural water facilities in Tanzania*. Water Policy 15: 79-100.

This study, based on data from 9 purposively-selected villages in Dodoma region, Tanzania, asks whether community management affects sustainability of rural water supply, and what role capacity building plays. The study focuses particularly on 2 case villages, in one of which there was significant conflict around community management, multiple changes in village water committee composition, and complete collapse of the water system. This study is descriptive rather than analytical, but provides useful insights. The authors are critical of community management for giving communities responsibilities without adequate capacities and resources.

Hope, R. (2015). *Is community water management the community's choice? Implications for water and development policy in Africa*. Water Policy 17(4): 664-678.

If rural water users are given a choice between competing alternative models for handpump maintenance service provision, would they choose community management? This study – part of the same research programme as (Koehler, Thomson et al. 2015) – addresses this question using a choice experiment with survey data from 118 handpump users in Kyuso and Ngomeni districts in Kenya (though it does not specify how these 118 were selected). It finds that community management is the least preferred option among users – but does not explore why. The study also finds that there is 'no acceptable payment mode' i.e. users simply don't want to pay for water. Hope argues that financial sustainability in the form of user payments requires significant operational efficiency improvements, i.e. much faster repairs. The author does not question the basic assumption that users should pay for water point operation & maintenance, and does not examine the community-level social impacts of community management.

Chowns, E. (2015). *Is Community Management an Efficient and Effective Model of Public Service Delivery? Lessons from the Rural Water Supply Sector in Malawi*. Public Administration and Development 35(4): 263-276.

This study asks whether the expected (technical and financial) benefits of community management have materialized in practice, and whether CM has strengthened institutional capacity at local, district and national level. Based on fieldwork covering several hundred water points in four districts of Malawi, Chowns finds that both technical and financial performance are weak under community management. Maintenance is rarely done, repairs are slow and sub-standard, and user committees are unable to collect and save funds: average savings are just 2% of expected levels. She argues that community management has 'worked' for the state (and donors) as a means of offloading responsibility for public service provision. However, the study does not really address the social impacts of CM.

van den Broek, M. and J. Brown (2015). *Blueprint for breakdown? Community Based Management of rural groundwater in Uganda*. Geoforum 67: 51-63.

This high-quality study argues that non-functionality of hand-pumps, and the precarious status of many, cannot be blamed solely on poor technology or siting of wells: rather the problem stems from a dearth of maintenance funds and management failings. It is based on extensive fieldwork in Masindi and Kiryandongo districts in mid-west Uganda, covering 107 water points. In great empirical detail the authors discuss the failure of collective action, exploring seven reasons why people do not want to pay water fees, and other problems such as low participation in committees and meetings. They conclude that the community based management model is a 'blueprint for breakdown', and alternative models are required.