

Case Study Water Point Payment Kenya

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Water point payment behaviour in Kwale, Kenya

Water supply in Kwale

In Kwale County, southern Kenya, around 22% of households use groundwater from boreholes or protected hand-dug wells, equipped with hand pumps, as their main source of water.

Most of these groundwater sources were constructed as part of the Kwale Water and Sanitation Project that ran from the mid-1980s to mid- 1990s. However, many of the water points - a total of 42% - were non-functional during this study in 2013.

There can be many reasons why boreholes and wells become non-functional: for example, mechanical breakdown of pump or borehole parts; damage to parts because of poor groundwater quality; falling groundwater levels due to over-abstraction or drought; or just because the water point wasn't high yielding enough in the first place to provide the required supply (Carter and Ross 2016). In this study, Foster and Hope identified a socio-economic factor that helps to explain the high rate of non-functional water points in Kwale.



A water pump installed in Kwale County. Image credit: [Integrity Action 2015](#)

Behaviour related to water use payment

Many of these water points are managed by community associations that charge water use fees from their members to cover water point maintenance. Foster and Hope (2016) identified that although water user fees are used for maintenance of such water sources, the fees are not always paid in full by users. A household survey of an audit of fee payment records in 2013 - 14, and including some records stretching back to 1987, showed that nearly 30% of water user fees were not paid. Even where fees were paid, only about 66% to 75% of payments were made in the same year as they were due.

The authors point out that in Kwale County, as across Africa, the socioeconomics of water bill payment is complex, and differs between individual and communal water points. For example, it is very hard to exclude people who do not pay from using a communal point source. Whereas Foster and Hope found 30% of communal water point fees unpaid, water providers to individual households found that the corresponding figure was just 9% (WASREB 2014, cited in Foster and Hope 2016).

When the authors asked people their reasons for not paying, the commonest reason was the users' lack of funds (10.4%). However, 7.4% gave others' non-payment as a reason; and 1.6% said they did not pay because they did not believe that the funds would be used for maintenance. This highlights the difference between **ability to pay** and **willingness to pay**.

The authors found that user fees for communal water points were less likely to be paid in certain circumstances:

If the water point is used in the rainy season

In the rainy season, the relative value of a groundwater source is low, which further decreases the willingness of users to pay for it. Almost 20% of people reported supplemented their drinking water supply with rain and river water in rainy season.

Foster and Hope considered that, in areas with good availability of seasonal water sources, careful consideration should be given to the whether community-managed hand pumps are the most sustainable water provision option. Especially in situations where households are dispersed, other options such as protected family wells could be more successful, as they remove the need for community scale revenue collection.

If water was not used for economically productive functions

People who used water for economically productive purposes were more likely to pay fees.

Foster and Hope recommended that water points could be made more financially sustainable if productive uses of the water were considered while planning, designing and managing water provision systems.

Summary

A good understanding of this type of behaviour at the household or individual level could help water point providers better understand the dynamics of, and design more effective systems for, revenue collection in a specific context.

Sources

This case study is based primarily on the following paper:

Foster T and Hope R. 2016. [A multi-decadal and social-ecological systems analysis of community waterpoint payment behaviours in rural Kenya](#). Journal of Rural Studies, 47, 85-96. doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2017.12.302

Other sources are:

Carter RC and Ross I. 2016. Beyond 'functionality' of handpump-supplied rural water services in developing countries. Waterlines 35 (1). doi: 10.3362/1756-3488.2016.008

Government of Kenya Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB).2014. Impact: a Performance Review of Kenya's Water Services Sector 2012-2013. Water Services Regulatory Board, Nairobi.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). 2012. The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census. In: Analytical Report on Housing Conditions, Amenities and Household Assets, vol. XI. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Nairobi

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