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## **The emptiers' perspective on the regulation of their services in Sub-Saharan Africa: a Delphi study**

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**EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE WASH SERVICES:  
FUTURE CHALLENGES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD**

**The emptiers' perspective on the regulation of their  
services in Sub-Saharan Africa: a Delphi study**

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**Introduction**

Onsite sanitation is the main form of sanitation in Africa (AfDB, *et al.*, 2020). Onsite sanitation facilities consist mainly of pits and tanks, which in urban settings are ideally emptied, and the faecal sludge transported to a disposal or treatment site. Emptying and transport services can pose a threat to public and environmental health if the sludge is not emptied, transported or disposed of safely (Parkinson and Quader, 2008), and to the workers themselves (Murungi and van Dijk, 2014). Regulation of these services is needed to protect the population, the environment and the sanitation workers (Murungi and van Dijk, 2014; Sinharoy, *et al.*, 2019). While many cities across Sub-Saharan Africa have developed regulations for sanitation services, enforcement of these regulations is lagging behind (Sinharoy, *et al.*, 2019; Weststrate, *et al.*, 2019). Compliance of service providers is key to ensuring regulations are actualised. This study investigates the perspectives of emptiers on the regulation of their sanitation services.

**Methodology**

An online Delphi study was conducted (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), composed of two rounds of online surveys in English or French. Round 1 asked questions about the services respondents provide, the regulatory framework they are working under and their opinions of it, along with a first selection of what they would deem 'useful regulatory mechanisms'. Round 2 presented respondents feedback from the first round, and asked them to select the 'five most useful' mechanisms for each of five regulatory categories investigated: rules, monitoring and control, sanctions, support and incentives, and pro-poor measures. Respondents were encouraged to explain their answers. Frequency and thematic analysis were conducted.

**Results and discussions**

**The respondents**

Between May and October 2020, 15 emptiers answered Round 1, of whom 12 completed Round 2. Most respondents provide mechanical emptying services (87%), some also provide semi-mechanical or manual services (33%). The majority own or work for medium-sized companies with two to five trucks (69%). All are private operators. As this study was run online, it was unable to reach smaller-sized service providers. The bilingual approach enabled participation from Anglophone and Francophone countries.

**Respondents' opinions of regulation of services**

Most respondents said that some regulatory mechanisms are in place in their city: rules (87%), sanctions (87%), or monitoring and control mechanisms (71%). Support and incentive mechanisms and pro-poor measures are less common (both identified as absent by 67% of respondents). For each category, over 80% said that the regulatory mechanisms in place in their cities are useful or could be if they were applied. Respondents also shared that support, incentives and pro-poor mechanisms are needed to provide safe services at a reasonable price to all.

Results show that all respondents are in favour of some type of regulation in their cities. Respondents see regulation as ‘good for business’ and highlighted that clear and fairly implemented regulations would: (i) improve the image of their work; (ii) increase demand for safe services; (iii) reduce the risk of harassment by officials and police; (iv) improve practices and protect the workers. However, they emphasized that regulation should be appropriate to the context, flexible, and enforced to all operators (public and private).

### **Regulatory mechanisms seen as useful by the respondents**

Most mechanisms presented to, or added by, the respondents show a high level of agreement as to their usefulness: 80% of mechanisms were seen as useful by more than 50% of respondents (Round 1). The mechanisms then selected as ‘most useful’ by more than 75% of the respondents (Round 2) are (by category):

- Rules: mandatory use of protective equipment; mandatory site for disposal; licence for operators;
- Sanctions: fine(s); warning for first offenders;
- Monitoring and control mechanisms: no preferred mechanism;
- Support and incentive mechanisms: help to access credit or financial support; training on how to operate and/or how to manage a business;
- Pro-poor measures: subsidies to build or upgrade toilets so that they are easy to empty; subsidies or contract given to the emptiers to empty poor households’ pits or tanks.

### **Conclusions and lessons learnt**

This study shows that emptiers are in favour of the regulation of their services, providing that it is adequate, fair and flexible. It highlights the importance of support, incentive and pro-poor mechanisms if emptying services are to be effectively regulated and accessible to all and shows the diversity of forms that regulations can take. It provides an account of the mechanisms the emptiers see as useful, which can provide a valuable starting point for regulators when deciding their regulatory strategies. Replicating this study at the local level could allow regulators to engage local providers and ensure their perspectives are taken into account.

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