



Management Structure of Kitgum Town Water Supply

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THE AUSTRIAN FUNDED *Kitgum Town Water Supply Rehabilitation and Extension Project* started 1998 with the technical rehabilitation of the existing system. The aim was to provide a sustainable water supply system for the town. After implementation of this part of the project it was agreed to add two more project phases concentrating on extension of the system, improvement of sanitary facilities and improvement of the management of the system.

Actual situation with regard to management

According to the project agreement between Uganda and Austria the local project partner is the Kitgum Town Council (KTC). A Water User Association (WUA) as referred to in the Water Statute (1995) is not mentioned in the project agreement, nevertheless "water user groups" should be established during the course of the project.

The WUA was elected but not registered. Due to this fact and according to KTC's interpretation of the statutes concerned the participation of the WUA in managing the Water Supply System is limited. Management power with regard to personnel power and access to accounts has KTC only.

Problem description and analyses

General

The responsibilities for management are not clear especially considering the connection between KTC and WUA. While the Water User Association seems to be the most direct representative of the local population its rights with respect to management decisions are neglectable. As all decisions have a financial implication they require the consent of KTC. Especially in emergencies the decision procedure is too time-consuming and experience has shown that final decisions are to be expected with a long delay.

Examples of operation and maintenance problems

Pump operation

The following problems with regard to daily pump operation were reported resulting in shortage of water in town:

- insufficient money available from KTC to keep a stock of fuel for the diesel engines for emergencies;
- no personnel decisions taken by KTC regarding unreliable pump attendants;

- no money available to buy an urgently required new motor for one pump; and
- decline in revenue from water sales due to unreliable operation of the system because of pump operation problems.

Borrowing of money from collection account

Money has been borrowed by Kitgum Town Council from the collection account (app. 40% of the total amount available per year) for electricity extension but not refunded.

Due to shortage of money in the Town Council between January and March 2001 an equivalent to one months income has been borrowed (but not refunded) directly from money collected from the customers.

Disconnections

Beginning of March 2001 customers who had not paid their water bill were disconnected with the consent of KTC. By beginning of April many were reconnected after complaining to KTC without having paid their debts.

Problems with regard to continuation of the project

Training of staff and improvement of management system

Within the Project's last phase various activities (especially training and management improvement) were planned which require the presence of clear management structures with defined duties and responsibilities. For project sustainability to address and include the responsible stakeholders is vital. The present situation with regard to administration and management is not yet suitable for adequate realisation of these project.

Handing over of structures, equipment and spare parts at the end of the project

At the end of the project structures, equipment and spare parts will be handed over. Without proper clarification of administrative responsibilities this process is not possible without generating unnecessary conflicts.

Problem analyses

During the first two phases of the project the technical aspects were overemphasised compared with the administrative and management aspects. The present management situation developed according to local distribution of power but was not considered a problem in

the beginning. The reason for this misperception might have been that a system as described could theoretically work without problems. It was overlooked that management of a water supply system in the local government's hands is automatically exposed to political influences and administrative conflicts of interest. All these problems increased because they were not handled right from the beginning. If addressed before the start of the project according to other experiences (comp. 0) a solution would probably have been easier to be realised.

Possible solutions

General

A suitable and sustainable solution can develop if this aspect is strongly emphasised already at the beginning of the project and followed up continuously. At the end of the project to change an existing but unsuccessful structure is much more complicated. For an implementing agency a direct intervention is impossible. The only possibility is the initiation of a discussion between stakeholders on different administrative levels by presenting problems caused by the actual situation.

In the case of Kitgum the problems were first discussed on a local level including the KTC, the district administration and the WUA. Unfortunately different interpretations of the same laws by different stakeholders although expected made a local solution unlikely. To come to one single interpretation the superior authority, the Ministry for Water, Lands and Environment, represented by DWD, was approached. In various discussions the following possibilities to solve the problematic situation were outlined:

Existing structures

The possible scenario on the level of the Local Government (KTC) would be the registration of the Water User Association as a legal entity and its appointment to the Water Authority based on the Water Statute 1995. The sole responsibility for management of the system would be with the Water User Association, the Town Council would follow only its supervisory duties according to the Local Governments Act, 1998 (Kagoro, 2001).

Privatisation

Local solution

Following the international trend of privatisation of water supply systems another possible option is the appointment of the KTC as a Water Authority but with the condition of operating through an independent board and a private operator thus eliminating direct influence of the Town Council on management decisions. The Town Council's role would again be limited to supervision of the board's and the private operator's actions.

Central solution

According to the Water Statute 1995 *any person or public body* can be appointed as a water authority for a water

supply area. Another option for Kitgum Town Water Supply therefore is the appointment of NWSC as a Water Authority for Kitgum water supply area. NWSC is also supposed to manage the system through a private operator. The main difference to the solutions described above is that NWSC would be directly responsible to the ministry. Additionally NWSC, being Water Authority for the capital and 16 other towns, would be the ideal structure for privatisation of an entire sector under an international operator.

Solution for Kitgum town water supply

Although local solutions were equally discussed, finally the Minister appointed NWSC as the water authority for Kitgum (and 4 other larger towns). This step, while without doubt eliminating political influence on the water system on local level, was taken to prepare NWSC as a whole for international privatisation (Muhairwe, 2001). Although this step contradicts World Bank Policy as mentioned e.g. in Madavo (2000) it was based on World Bank recommendation (Kajura, 2001). Additionally as this development is also not according to the Austrian Development Policy questions like how within this arrangement the role of the water users can be strengthened will have to be discussed.

Example of South Western towns water and sanitation project

For South Western Towns Water and Sanitation Project, an equally Austrian funded project, the approach was different from the beginning. Before designing or constructing the technical part the development of a suitable management structure was followed. The now existing structure is comparable to the description under 0 tending towards 0. This system is working now very well since app. 5 years.

Summary

The example shows that the importance of a both legally correct and in the long term sustainable management structure can not be underestimated. The real problems to be solved in the course of this project are/were not the technical aspects but only at the side of the management. The Problems encountered show again that the best system is unable to be operated sustainable if the management is exposed to political influence too much. To solve such situations is equally difficult as in this case it meant interfering with structures grown over years. Now to develop local sustainable structures is impossible as it would undermine the acting authority. Solutions have to be discussed and initiated at a central level, although again, as this example shows, after clarification at this level the realisation of the initial approach has to be reconsidered.

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