

Our water, our waste, our town

Supporting civil society to engage in urban water and sanitation reforms

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Glossary

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Advocacy

Advocacy means taking action to bring about the change you are seeking. Advocacy work can be targeted at changing national or even international policy. But it can also take place in a local context: it can mean empowering individuals and local communities to take action for themselves to achieve change.

Bulk water

Treated water supplied by a utility to a facility in large volume for use, onward sale or distribution to consumers.

Citizens' Report Cards (CRCs)

CRCs are surveys in which local communities rate the performance of public utilities, like water and sewerage.

Civil society organisations (CSOs)

CSOs include non governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, faith-based organisations, community based-groups, professional associations, women's groups and others representing the interests of national, regional and local populations.

These groups become politically active when they identify a need to campaign on a particular issue.

As globalisation increases, CSOs have an important role to play in aligning economic activities with social and environmental priorities.

Consumer

Someone who buys water for their own personal use and therefore has rights under sectoral, consumer or commercial law.

Contract

A legally binding agreement between parties, eg a contractor and government, that spells out what has to be done, by whom, when, how much it will cost and what results have to be achieved.

Cost recovery

This is when the total revenue collected by the utility equals the total cost of supplying the water. The revenue may include tariff collected from customers and subsidies provided by governments or under ODA funds. At minimum,

the cost of supplying the water should include all items of operations, maintenance and repairs. A higher level would include debt servicing charges, such as interest paid on loans.

Country Assistance Strategy (CAS)

The CAS is prepared by the World Bank and other IFIs every three to five years and sets out the World Bank's plans for working with a country based on an assessment of its development priorities.

Evaluation

Evaluation means ascertaining whether the objectives of an activity have been achieved, how they were achieved, and what can be learnt from the success or failure.

Expenditure

All the outgoings the water utility has to pay for.

Governance

Governance is the process through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences within the public domain. It is intensely political; it recognises that power exists inside and outside formal authority and the institutions of government.

Government

Government is the structure of a country that, in the context of this manual, is responsible for:

- Setting laws and policies – including those that relate to the development and management of resources such as water
- Establishing organisations and frameworks – to regulate the development and management of water, accommodating the needs of various stakeholders
- Enabling basic services such as water and sanitation to be delivered
- Finding ways of getting consumers of water – farmers, business, and households – to work with those providing water services

Hydrology

Hydrology is the study of the movement, distribution, and quality of water on the Earth's surface.

International Finance Institutions (IFIs)

These are international organisations which use public funds from governments to loan or grant money to countries for development projects and

other business ventures. They include the World Bank, regional development banks and export agencies.

Latrines

Latrines are simple toilets, the basic infrastructure for sanitation.

Lobbying

The process of trying to directly influence decision-makers, such as politicians, civil servants, or corporate chief executives.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

These targets, agreed by all governments, aim to tackle world poverty through actions including halving the proportions of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015.

Monitoring

This is a continuous assessment of progress to check if everything is going well and making adjustments if it's not.

Municipality

The governing body of a city, town or district and its local administrative unit.

Non-revenue water (NRW)

The water for which the utility receives no revenue. It includes unaccounted for water (see below) as well as water that is not paid for because it is used for things like firefighting or for free water from community standposts.

Operations and maintenance (O&M)

The procedures and actions required to keep water flowing from source to consumers. A basic test of tariff revenue is whether it is sufficient to pay for the utility's O&M costs.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)

A major national planning document that analyses poverty and proposes detailed strategies, involving many different sectors, to reduce it. Ideally these are prepared by government with extensive participation from communities. These guide national and international investments and it is essential that the poverty reducing impacts of water and sanitation are clearly spelt out.

Private sector participation (PSP)

A private company can be contracted to a public utility water system. The private company might be given various responsibilities – billing, leak detection, design, construction etc – under different forms of contracts.

Privatisation

The transfer or sale of ownership of the assets and liabilities of a utility from the public sector (government) to the private sector (business). It is the most extreme form of private sector participation.

Public utility

A company that provides a public service such as water supply, sewerage, electricity, waste disposal, gas etc. These are predominantly publically owned but may use private companies for aspects of operation and management or providing specialised services.

Public utility turnaround

Over 90% of urban water supply is provided by utilities managed by the public service. Many need to be “turned around” – improved with reforms that strengthen their performance in delivering better water services to more people at an affordable price.

Raw water

This is pre-treated water which comes from a source such as an aquifer (underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock), a river, lake or rainfall.

Reforms

Water sector reforms include changes in laws, regulations or policies, to institutions; changes in organisation of the water operator; strengthening water governance and accountability and securing funds to invest in the water supply system.

Regulator

An independent body responsible for establishing, monitoring and enforcing regulations in the water sector.

Relationships

When we refer to ‘relationships’ in this manual we are talking about how different organisations involved in water supplies work together. For example, how the government works with the water utility or how the water utility works with consumers.

Water revenue

The sources of funds the water utility uses to pay its operating costs. These mostly consist of revenue from water (and sewerage) tariffs and connection charges. Sometimes utilities also receive a subsidy from central or local government.

Right to Information Act

A law in some countries which allows members of the public to obtain documents from government departments and question the government on decisions, policies and expenditure. In India, the Act came in to effect in 2005, and allows people to inspect government records, take copies and question the government for a fee of 10 rupees.

Sanitation

Sanitation is the management of waste, especially human excreta.

Sewage

Sewage is the waste carried away in sewers.

Sewerage

Sewerage is the system of sewers in a city.

Sewers

Sewers are underground pipes which collect and carry storm water, wastewater and trade as well as household waste matter away for treatment and disposal.

Small scale independent providers (SSIPs)

People and businesses involved in buying water (from the official utility) or producing water (eg from a borehole), and selling it on to consumers. They are found in urban areas where the water network does not reach, or where water supplies are inadequate.

Social businesses

Businesses that make profits but reinvest such profits in the business in order to achieve social goals rather than benefit their shareholders.

Stormwater

Rainwater that runs off roads, the ground, roofs, footpaths etc and is ideally carried off in drains to prevent flooding.

Subsidies

A contribution from local or central government to the operating costs of delivering water supplies.

Sustainable cost recovery

This is where at least operation and maintenance costs are covered from tariffs, utilising cross-subsidies between users, and government taxation and donor transfer cover investments in network expansion and renewal.

Tariffs

These are charges for consumers' water usage and are usually the major source

of revenue for the utility. They can be charged monthly on either a flat rate or based on metered volumes of water used, or people pay per container filled.

Unaccounted-for-water (UfW)

Unaccounted-for-water is the water that “disappears” because a utility cannot tell what happened to it, and for which they receive no revenue (water that is stolen, leaked, never billed, etc).

Urban water system

The pipes, pumps, reservoirs, treatment plants and taps through which water is supplied to people living in towns or cities. The system requires people with a range of skills and experience, assets in the form of buildings, equipment, tools and vehicles, and systems for managing water, staff, finances and consumers.

Wastewater

Water that carries waste from homes, businesses, and industries. A small proportion of consumers may be connected to a sewer but many will dispose of wastewater into a soakaway (a deep hole in the ground covered with a solid concrete lid and including a pipe enabling excess water to drain away into the earth), open drains or on the ground.

Water kiosks

Water kiosks consist of a sheltered tapstand, connected to the piped network from which people collect (and usually pay for) water in containers.