



# Kenya's KESSP School Infrastructure Improvement Program: An assessment of roles and responsibilities

February 2011

## Executive Summary

The SWASH+ program has identified the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) as a potential mechanism for scaling up school water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and has been working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to learn about this process and its challenges. Given the many seemingly complex roles involved in KESSP, we set out to interview those who had previously been involved in a KESSP project to understand how school, community, and district-level actors perceive and take on their roles and responsibilities vis à vis the roles defined in the program's guidelines, and to document challenges that they experience.

Our interviews demonstrated that although some roles and responsibilities were well adopted by the appropriate people, there are several areas where a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, or procedures impaired progress or caused disagreements. In order to improve the implementation of the KESSP School Infrastructure Improvement Program, which could provide improvements in school WASH to children across Kenya, we recommend the following improvements:

1. **Clarify roles and responsibilities:** Given common confusion over who is to do which task, provide a detailed activity timeline with clear indication of who is responsible at both the school/community (s/c) and District Infrastructure Coordinating Team (DICT) level. Include it in trainings, training handbooks, and post it publicly at the school.
2. **Increase and clarify source of monitoring budget:** In trainings and written materials, ensure *all* DICT and s/c members are keenly aware of who is to pay for monitoring visit costs. DICT monitoring budgets should also be increased to ensure sufficient monitoring support to schools.
3. **Monitoring should be framed as a supportive activity:** Due to concerns from some s/c members that monitoring is a faultfinding mission, DICT members should be trained to conduct monitoring in a positive way with open communication that supports schools in improving their projects.
4. **Offer additional trainings:** Given the high turnover rate for DICT and s/c members, there should be regular opportunities to receive training.
5. **Include all ministries:** Improve the level of inclusion of DICT members who are not in the MoE. These people should equally receive training and handbooks and should be involved in meetings.
6. **Improve school's capacity to manage finances:** Explore ways to improve school-level skills in financial management through better training and/or simpler accounting tools, or consider providing an accountant to support schools.
7. **Improve community engagement:** Engage communities early with information about actual costs of the project to justify the need for a community contribution.



## Introduction

Through the School Infrastructure Improvement Programme (SIIP) arm of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), the Kenyan Ministry of Education (MoE) provides direct funding to schools to carry out permanent infrastructure projects planned by community members. SWASH+<sup>1</sup> identified KESSP as a potential mechanism for scaling up school water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and has been working with the MoE to learn about this process and the challenges within. Scaled school WASH programs have the potential to impact large populations of children more efficiently; however, decentralizing the management of such projects requires that school and community members are equipped with rigorous training, clear processes, and adequate professional support.

The MoE provides SIIP manuals and training to guide communities in planning and managing these infrastructure projects and to explain the roles and responsibilities various school and community members are to take on. Likewise, the DICT has its own roles to play in supporting and monitoring these projects. Given the many seemingly complex roles involved, we set out to interview those who had previously been involved in a SIIP project to address the following research questions:

1. Which responsibilities do the school, community, and district-level actors take on vis à vis the roles defined in the SIIP guidelines?
2. Are there any conflicts in perceived responsibilities?
3. Are there any challenges that prevent people from carrying out their responsibilities?

## Methods

In September, 2010 SWASH+ conducted structured interviews with people serving in key roles related to KESSP-funded infrastructure grants at both the school/community and district level. Respondents were interviewed individually so that the presence of other actors would not influence their answers. Respondents used a set of cards representing the various activities that typically occur during a SIIP project to answer structured questions about a timeline of events, persons responsible for each activity, and challenges related to each part of the process. Additional questions addressed the level of training received and the frequency and nature of monitoring activities.

Responses were evaluated against guidance given in the School Infrastructure Management Handbook, which outlines the intended roles, responsibilities, and process of administering these grants. This exercise was not intended to produce a statistically representative sample. Rather, results should be interpreted as a tool to help relevant ministries identify potential gaps and strengths in the SIIP process. SWASH+ is currently undertaking additional research that will also inform potential improvements to this scaled program.

## Results

We collected data in two districts in Nyanza Province and one in Rift Valley Province. Respondents included eight DICT members: two district education officers (DEO), two district schools auditors (DSA), two public works officers (DPWO), one district public health officer (DPHO), and one district quality assurance and standards officer (DQASO). We also interviewed 14 individuals representing six schools—two per district. These included three School Infrastructure Committee (SIC) secretaries, two SIC chairs, two SIC parent representatives, four head teachers, and three School Management Committee (SMC) chairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sustaining and Scaling School Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, Plus Community Impacts (SWASH+) is a five-year applied research project to identify, develop, and test innovative approaches to school-based water, sanitation, and hygiene in Kenya.



## Training

Figure 1 shows the school/community (depicted by the abbreviation s/c) and DICT members that received training and handbooks as well as the percentage that fully read these materials. There appears to be low usage of manuals among those who undergo training. Less than 30% of s/c and DICT interviewees read the management or technical handbooks. Some did not receive them at all. Training was particularly lacking for non-MoE DICT members. Only four of the eight DICT members attended training about KESSP, and all four worked within the MoE. Further, only MoE respondents received the management and technical handbooks, all of whom said they at least partially read them. If DICT members within MoPHS or MoPW are not incorporated into training activities, it is understandable for them to have trouble knowing what is expected of them. The lack of training for some could be due to staff turnover, which is a problem School infrastructure management unit (SIMU) staff have noted. This points to the need for refresher trainings that new officers and school/community members can attend.

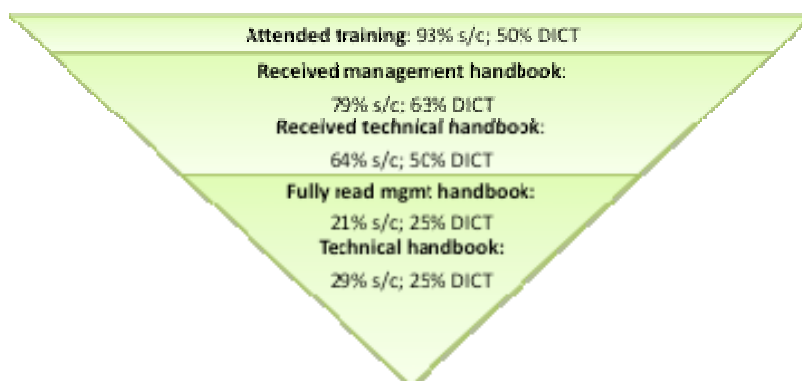


Figure 1. Training and materials received by respondents

## Planning and implementation

There appears to be significant ambiguity regarding the roles of developing and reviewing the school infrastructure development plan (SIDP). According to the management handbook, communities are to form an SIC, which together with the SMC has the responsibility of creating the development plan. Out of 14 s/c respondents only four included the SIC among those responsible for creating this plan, and five included the SMC. Out of seven respondents who serve as officers on the SIC, only two said that their committee was responsible. Four did not know who was supposed to do this activity. A head teacher and SIC chair at separate schools claimed the head teacher is solely responsible. In two other schools, an SIC chairperson thought the Ministry of Education alone was to create the SIDP while an SIC parent representative pointed to the DICT. This lack of knowledge implies that participants were not well informed, and either some or all members of the SIC may have been cut out of the SIDP creation process, against the stated procedures of SIIP. Similarly, although DICT members are to review SIDPs, but only three of the eight DICT members listed district-level actors among those responsible.

The responsibility for reviewing bids from artisans/fundis was largely understood, as eleven of the 14 respondents appropriately assigned either sole or shared responsibility to the SIC. Most respondents also had some knowledge of who was responsible for purchasing materials and hiring artisans/fundis.

Respondents voiced several challenges associated with planning a SIIP project. A person at two schools indicated that it was difficult to identify qualified artisans/fundis, and two DICT members confirmed this. In 50% of the schools, at least one person expressed the difficulty in securing community contribution due to the belief that the grant is sufficient. Others discussed how local price fluctuation after budgeting leads to insufficient funds.



## Monitoring and oversight of implementation

DICT members are to make regular monitoring visits to schools using funds from the DICT budget, which is sourced by the MoE. Six of the eight DICT members we interviewed said that monitoring funds were insufficient and left them sometimes unable to visit the schools. Some DICT members clearly misunderstood the source of the monitoring budget. Three specifically indicated that schools are responsible for providing for transport and lunches out of their own SIIP budgets, which is not true. These people did not appear to have any knowledge of the DICT monitoring budget line. For example, one person stated that *schools are given funds* to pay for their monitoring visits, but they don't release them, causing the monitors to pay from their own pockets. A respondent at two of the six schools confirmed this by saying that payment was requested by a person who came to monitor.

Schools received an average of three monitoring visits by DICT members throughout the course of their projects, although it was not always clear from the interviews which DICT members visited. All indicated that monitoring findings were shared with some s/c members. People at the s/c level appreciated these visits, particularly when monitors were helpful, rather than faultfinding. Several respondents wanted more monitoring, particularly from the Ministry of Public Works, which has the technical expertise they need.

Few s/c members took personal responsibility for correcting problems identified through monitoring, which suggests an opportunity for failure to make necessary changes. Nonetheless, respondents at each school said that problems identified through monitoring were corrected.

## Financial management

The head teacher is ultimately responsible for reporting on all of the school's finances, including SIIP funds. There were several complaints from DICT members and even some s/c members about the inability of school personnel to do proper financial management. DICT members complained of disorganized or absent accounting records. One head teacher complained that he had too many other responsibilities to be able to attend to accounts management.

In terms of financial monitoring, very few s/c actors take responsibility for this and instead place this role on the DICT alone. Although the DICT does bear monitoring responsibility, the lack of attention to financial oversight at the s/c level may suggest an opportunity for mismanagement to go unnoticed.

## General

At least one person in 50% of the schools talked of general conflict or confusion between the roles of the head teacher, SMC, and SIC. Some claimed that head teachers exert too much control while some head teachers complained that the community placed too much responsibility on them. At two schools, someone noted that illiteracy limited some SIC members from taking on their roles.

## Conclusion

At the schools we visited, it appears that a percentage of s/c members and DICT actors were able to collectively accomplish most of the activities that are involved in SIIP projects, and some roles were well adopted. However, we identified several examples of a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, or procedures that impaired progress or caused disagreements. In order to improve the implementation of the SIIP program, which could provide scaled WASH enhancements to children across Kenya, we recommend the seven improvements listed at the beginning of this document.