

West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Program (USAID WA-WASH)

A LOOK BACK AT FOUR YEARS OF COMMUNAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP IN BURKINA FASO

PROMOTING THE ADOPTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH

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IRC

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Introduction

The USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene program (USAID-WA-WASH) was carried out between 2011 and 2015 with the overall goal of increasing sustainable access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in Burkina Faso, Niger and Ghana. USAID-WA-WASH should enable the introduction of low-cost WASH technologies, the promotion of appropriate hygiene practices at the community level, the implementation of sustainable services delivery models, as well as support cooperation between national and regional actors, and knowledge sharing across the sub-region. Within the program, IRC Burkina Faso's main task was the implementation of approaches that strengthen the sustainability and scalability of potable water supply services.

Specifically, IRC Burkina Faso had to identify deficiencies and weaknesses of management practices along the chain of supply services at the communal, provincial and national levels, and to explore possible solutions that are reproducible in other parts of the country and adapted to the sector's vision and capacity. Furthermore, IRC Burkina Faso actively encouraged the uptake of these approaches and some approaches developed by IRC in other countries. In order to do this, IRC Burkina Faso based its efforts on two proven, conceptually-grounded work methodologies: one is the "life cycle costs" approach developed in the scope of the WASHCost program (2008-2012) and the other is the "Sustainable Services at Scale" approach, known as Triple-S, which focuses on service delivery.

For several years now, IRC has been developing and testing a number of approaches and tools in various countries to assist the regulatory authorities in assessing the performance of water services. Here, assessment of performance starts with the monitoring of the quality and the costs of the services provided. It involves an examination of the appropriateness of the scale at which the service is maintained: is the municipality the right entity able to provide sustainable water services? If so, what set of conditions enables sustainable services? What are the alternatives? In fact, efficient and sustainable service provision also demands that actions be taken at national and regional levels in order to enable the dissemination and adoption of these new practices.

This volume is a collection of ideas and solutions with potential, and also of issues and challenges raised by IRC Burkina Faso's team and actors in the sector. It is by no means exhaustive, and does not reflect all of IRC's activities that were carried out in the frame of the WA-WASH program. It highlights some of the activities and ideas led by IRC Burkina Faso and its partners, aimed at the sector as a whole. Most of the articles in this volume have already been published as blogs on IRC's website¹, and were here only updated and put into context for the sake of consistency. In addition to presenting some of the groundbreaking conceptual and practical realizations of IRC Burkina Faso, this compilation of articles aims to nourish the ongoing dialogue within the sector and provide food for thought on the strengths and weaknesses related to the provision of drinking water services in Burkina Faso. There are four sections, organized so as to follow the increase in geographical range of the different aspects of water service management. The first section focuses on the municipal level, the second section on inter-municipal dynamics, and the third on issues related to duplication/replication at the national level. Finally, the fourth section presents examples of exchange and sharing at the sub-regional level.

¹ See <http://www.ircwash.org/>.

1. Strengthening municipal capacity to better understand and monitor drinking water services

Continued access to safe drinking water in rural areas remains a major challenge in much of Africa. Rural Burkina Faso is no exception to this situation, and indicators for clean water accessibility remain weak (58.5% in rural areas, DGRE, 2010), despite the efforts made by the sector. A reform of water services in rural areas of the Sahel region has been carried out since 2008. It lays down the foundations for the involvement and responsibility of municipalities as contractors, owners and operators of drinking water services. The reform also brought in the operational framework for the use of the infrastructure at the level of the village through the "*associations d'usagers de l'eau*" (Water Users' Associations, WUAs) and private operators for small piped water schemes.

In this context, IRC Burkina Faso carried an examination of the existing institutions, focusing on the regulatory framework that governs them. Municipalities must ensure coordination, pricing regime and overall support, particularly to the WUAs. A municipality must formalize its working relationship with WUAs, owners/farmers and maintenance technicians, and must also ensure the monitoring of the contracts. Moreover, the municipality must establish pricing regime on its territory (royalties, water tariffs), as well as target the support it needs while addressing the needs of WUAs.

The regulatory framework also defines the obligations of the Water Users' Association. The WUAs have three types of functions: the coordination of managers and maintenance technicians; and treasury management, i.e., collection of payments and remuneration of service providers (e.g. local mechanics). The third function of WUAs, though not explicitly stated in the regulation, is representing users.

Although the functions are well spelled out in the regulation, how are they implemented and carried out by the municipalities and within the WUAs? IRC Burkina Faso has sought to answer these questions by conducting a comprehensive baseline study². This study is based on data collected between 2011 and 2012 in eight municipalities of the Sahel region. It aims to evaluate the performance of municipalities and WUAs, to, on one hand, identify the interventions aimed at strengthening the functions that are well performed and, on the other hand, suggest changes of scale for the duties in escheat or failing despite following the letter of the law. Using this diagnosis, IRC Burkina Faso focused its analysis on two municipalities in the Sahel: Aribinda and Gorgadji.

Main findings for Aribinda and Gorgadji

On the formal level, the implementation of the reform is well underway in the municipality of Aribinda. However, in 2012, only one AWU is fully compliant with the criteria set by the reform. In practice, WUAs vary immensely in their implementation of the reform: some are managing in its entirety the existing infrastructure on their territory while others are not managing anything. The level of execution of the different AWU functions – coordination, treasury management and representation – does not correlate with the level of AWU compliance. Service provision is essentially seasonal: in the rainy season, most of

² "Organisation et gestion des services d'eau potable en milieu rural au Burkina Faso : état des lieux dans huit communes de la région du Sahel", available at: <http://fr.ircwash.org/resources/organisation-et-gestion-des-services-d%E2%80%99eau-potable-en-milieu-rural-au-burkina-faso-etat>.

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the infrastructure is neglected by managers and possibly by the population. Few managers are actually paid and the management of water point sources is mostly done voluntarily. Prices are low and uneven across the municipality if not at the village level. WUAs appear unable to cope with the repair needs of boreholes equipped with hand pumps (hand pumps) if they rely only on their revenue.

The main formal elements associated with the management of drinking water supply infrastructure (as prescribed by the reform) are in place in the municipality of Gorgadji, both at the level of the municipality and at the level of the WUAs. All villages have WUAs but none of them has been constituted in accordance with regulations. In addition to the lack of education of the members of their executive committee, the WUAs suffer most from a problem of legitimacy of their representation, which results in the non-management of hand pumps. In 2012, only one AWU was managing its entire infrastructure, and more than half of the hand pumps in the municipality are beyond the control of WUAs. Nevertheless, almost all the municipality's hand pumps have a manager. In other words, the changes in scale called for by the reform for the management of hand pumps – i.e. a management committee for each hand pump and the management of all hand pumps in a village by one AWU – were not effective in Gorgadji in 2012.

In light of these findings, IRC Burkina Faso has sought to work with local authorities to address some of these gaps. As well, the team also worked to develop further some aspects of infrastructure management, notably aspects related to financial management. The following sub-sections detail the key activities that have taken place since.

1.1 Municipal monitoring to improve service performance

To better coordinate the drinking water supply services in its territory, IRC Burkina Faso, with the support of the Regional Directorate (*Direction Régionale*), worked with the Aribinda and Gorgadji municipalities to establish a monitoring system of the service.

The purpose of the monitoring is to measure periodically the performance of public service for drinking water supply in Aribinda and Gorgadji so as to improve the decisions and actions taken by the different actors, including service providers, users, support and assistance providers, and financial partners.

Monitoring is not an one-off operation but a cyclical, continuous and integrated process associated with decision making. The monitoring regime, and more generally the accompanying mechanisms for the municipalities, started in September 2013, by the operationalization of the monitoring-and-evaluation framework. It is led by the municipalities, with the technical support of IRC. The monitoring covers a number of elements related to technical and financial performance, governance, activities and results.

As a first step, municipal technicians and the "*commissions communales de l'eau et de l'assainissement*" (municipal committees for water and sanitation, MCWS) were trained in the use of information-gathering tools. Once the data was collected, the technical team of IRC Burkina Faso, accompanied by municipal technicians, carried out the analysis. After validation, the data was compiled into an existing database that was modeled to reflect the initial diagnosis. The database was then used to process and query the data tables to plot the various indicators, and a report was compiled on the performance of

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managers of hand pumps as well, to clarify the roles and renew trust. In Gorgadji, these independent managers have transferred all revenue back to the WUAs, to be used to maintain the equipment.

Since the implementation of a monitoring routine at the municipal level, there has been a number of changes taking place, summarized in the Table 2 below. The number of working equipment in the municipality is down, but this is explained by a better knowledge of the park and by the withdrawal of discontinued and non-functioning hand pumps over the last years. Note that the number of hand pumps under WUAs' control has risen significantly since September 2013. In other words, many hand pumps previously managed by independent managers have been reassigned to WUAs. The revenue generated by these hand pumps was also transferred to the WUAs. Indeed, continued support to WUAs and interventions by the municipalities, supported by IRC and Eau-Vive, have been successful, yielding positive results. The average duration of outages in Gorgadji has been greatly reduced since 2013. This is not the case in Aribinda where the average outage duration is negatively influenced by the presence of long outages on equipment abandoned by the population. Eventually, the current number of working municipal equipment is deemed to decrease further (as non-functioning and abandoned equipment is left out of the accountability).

Table 2: Aribinda and Gorgadji, two characteristic municipalities of the Sahel

	Aribinda		Gorgadji	
	Sept-Dec 2013	Jan-Mar 2015	Sept-Dec 2013	Jan-Mar 2015
Working municipal hydraulic equipment	210 hand pumps 1 small piped-system network (SPSN)	195 hand pumps 1 SPSN	150 hand pumps 1 SPSN	133 hand pumps 1 SPSN
Number of hand pumps under AWU control	17	151	15	86
Average duration of outages	5 days	5 days	6 days	1 day
Number of conforming WUAs	1 out of 48	46 out of 48	0 out of 16	13 out of 16

Now that municipal monitoring has been successfully established since 2013, the question of the sustainability of the achievements arises. Among the expected challenges, data analysis is probably the most important bottleneck of the monitoring system. Not only is technical equipment (computers, software etc.) not readily available in the municipality but the technical skills to operate the Excel database and perform basic operations are far from uniform among municipal and regional technicians.

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While it is always possible to perform the calculations manually, the unwieldiness of the approach compromises its implementation. A first Excel training was provided in 2014 to accelerate computer skill development of the technical staff which could ensure the continuity of the monitoring system, but it may well be insufficient for complete staff independence in carrying out data analysis.

Original article written in French by Nourouhine Salouka, communication officer, IRC Burkina Faso.

1.2 Understanding the actual demand to optimize drinking water supply

The correlation between access to drinking water, health, nutrition and other development indicators is well known. At sector level, this often translates into the requirement to allocate additional funding to new infrastructure (in the rural sector, mainly to water pumps), that would naturally lead to widespread use by households, attracted by convenience and quality of service. How is it then that in some cases the existence of formal boreholes does not guarantee their use by households?

In Burkina Faso, although the rate of access to equipment (improved water sources) in rural areas is estimated at nearly 59% and in some villages exceeds 100% (which means these villages are over-equipped), many villagers continue to use unimproved water sources – so-called traditional water sources (such as wells or surface water), considered unfit for consumption – to meet their basic needs.

IRC conducted a survey of 521 households (mainly agro-pastoralists) in 6 villages of the Aribinda and Gorgadji municipalities in the Sahel, to understand water consumption patterns and the factors underlying the households' water procurement strategy.



Children collecting water from a pond in Gorgadji Photo: IRC

As in the rest of the country, equipment coverage rates range from 66% in Tonga to 121% in Dalla, yet many households do not use, or do not exclusively use, the hand pumps / formal water sources and still satisfy part of their water by using non-improved / traditional water sources. Only 48% of households use exclusively improved water sources to meet all of their water needs, and 12% of households make use of both improved and non-improved water sources to meet all their water needs. An alarming 40% of households resort to non-improved/traditional water sources exclusively to meet all their domestic water needs. The main factors behind the use of unimproved sources relate to the convenience and perceived quality of the water.

1. Distance and waiting time at hand pumps: households will bear up to 30 minutes waiting time, but beyond that, prefer to go to the unimproved water sources where there is often no waiting time. This problem is worsened by the use of improved water sources for productive (for market gardens and livestock watering) and social (construction) needs, needs that are covered by the improved water sources in the absence of viable alternatives.

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2. Perception of water quality: surprisingly, households that use unimproved water sources always evoke the perception of better water quality (freshness and taste) as a factor explaining their choice. Conversely, they report being negatively affected when consuming the water coming from the improved sources.

Contrary to the arguments often put forward, the price of water does not affect the household's choice in water sources. In fact, financial capacity is not a determinant of household choice, given that all households have similar financial capacities and households combining use of formal and informal sources are up to date in their payments. On the basis of these findings, some practical recommendations can be made:

1. Focus on reducing waiting time at boreholes by:
 - Reducing the current crowding standards (a maximum of 300 people per water point)
 - Taking into account productive uses into the design standards of boreholes
 - Replacing hand pumps with a high water debit with autonomous water sources or small piped-system networks.
2. Ensure adequate water quality by:
 - Regularly monitoring water quality at boreholes, to ensure people are encouraged to use water that is (truly) potable. This is particular of concern in a country where water source pollution is a consistent challenge and irregular water quality testing, the norm in rural areas.
 - Improve adequate water quality of informal water sources to reduce consumption risks.
 - Although some of these findings confirm intuitions (e.g. improved convenience obviously leads to greater use), others contradict some of the sector's widespread beliefs, such as that water costs too much and better water quality automatically leads to increased use.

Overall the findings highlight the importance for the sector to take steps to more systematically understand the demands and consumption patterns of users, in order to adjust standards and adapt 'the offer' to something that will really be valued and used. In a context where hand pumps are the most common type of improved water sources, an increase in water service provision, through small piped-system networks for example, could change the current situation and help modify user behavior.

Original article written in French by Julia Boulenouar, Aguaconsult.

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1.3 Helping municipalities choose adapted technologies – Small piped-system networks perform better and are cheaper than hand pumps

In the WASH sector, it is generally understood that supplying water through a simplified pipe system is a financially unsound technology in the context of rural areas. It is often argued that the population density is too low to establish and maintain viable piped-system networks. But the findings of a comprehensive study of the water supply in four small towns in the Sahel region shows that simplified piped-system networks for drinking water supply provide better service than hand pumps and at a lower cost when the serviced population exceeds 1500 inhabitants.

Financial data for different types of equipment were collected in four small towns in the Sahel: Gasseliki, Seytenga, Mansilla and Titabé. These small towns have a population of less than 7,500 inhabitants and each of them has one small piped-system network and a number of hand pumps.

When taking into account all aspects of costs, and notably the costs related to supporting hand pump managers and the water services' authorities responsible for monitoring the decentralized supply system and the actual demand (expressed by the number of actual users), it turns out that a simplified piped-system network for drinking water supply will cost less per user than hand pumps system delivery. hand pump in the studied sites. This is the case even in Titabé, where the maximum network capacity is 10,000 m³ or 1,500 people.



Gorgadji's small piped water scheme Photo: IRC

It is hardly surprising that simplified piped-system networks that distribute water directly to fountain terminals or to private connections offer a better service overall than the water supplied by hand pumps. Indeed, the distribution exit point is closer, the water is effortlessly accessed via a tap, and water cleanliness is guaranteed. The high demand for this type of distribution service is even more surprising given that its price is ten times higher than that of a hand pump to users which consume 10 to 20 liters per day.

An even more unexpected finding is that the actual cost of a higher-level service is lower in reality. Since John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), economists agree that drinking water distributed via a simplified supply network is in fact a natural monopoly and that, by the economies of scale effect, the average cost of production decreases as the amount of water that is supplied increases. Also, beyond a certain volume (expressed either in m³ or in size of population), water distribution on piped-system networks is cheaper

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than delivery by autonomous devices such as hand pumps, where average cost is constant. In other words, because of economies of scale mechanisms, each additional user costs less than the previous user. It is in the interest of all users, new and long-time, and in the interest of service providers that all residents have access to water service. Servicing everyone benefits all. So what is hampering the achievement of this goal?

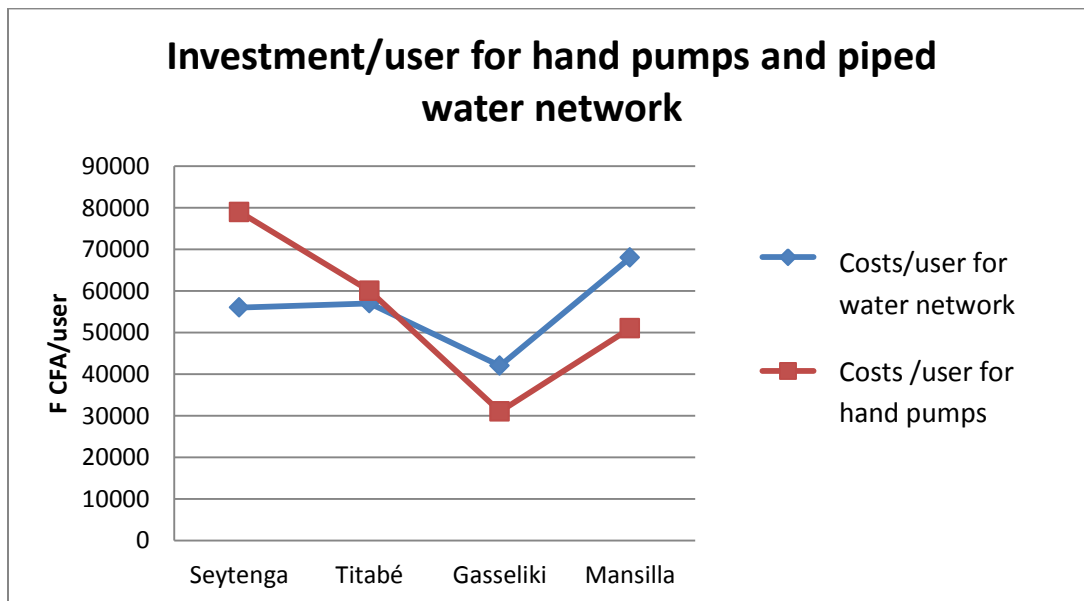
Table 3 Unit costs for the supply of water compared between small-piped network and hand pumps in 4 small towns (FCA, 2011)

	Gasseliki		Mansilla		Seytenga		Titabé	
	Tap	Hand pump	Tap	Hand pump	Tap	Hand pump	Tap	Hand pump
Investment/user	50229	37671	78333	62188	66374	92086	66374	71755
Recurring costs/user/year	2392	3588	3588	4784	2990	6578	2990	4784

Is my village large enough, is the population density sufficiently high?

A first constraint is created by the size and density of the population of the rural village. Our study indicates that the minimum number of people needed to build a viable network service is well below what is generally assumed (see figure below).

Figure 1: Investment per user for water delivery by boreholes with hand pumps and by small piped-network system



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The size of the population may even be less if all water uses are taken into account and if the production capacity is adapted to the needs of the rural population. We know that the water needs of the rural population are not solely covering domestic uses (drinking, cooking, hygiene). Especially in arid and semi-arid regions like the Sahel, water is also necessary for productive uses. 60 liters per person per day is considered to be the basic amount to cover domestic and productive needs in rural areas. For a village of 500 inhabitants, it would therefore amount to approximately 10,000 m³ of water to cover all domestic and production needs for one year, which corresponds approximately to the current capacity of the network of Titabé.

Is there a regulator which channels monopoly profits to the users?

A second constraint relates to how the profit generated by the simplified piped-system network is divided between the service operator, the authority responsible for water service and the poor population. In order for the latter to be the first to benefit from the water network, the distribution system must be regulated. Tracking the evolution of costs and the quality of service over time and at the appropriate levels is essential to help regulate for sustainable and equitable access to water.

The levels at which costs and quality of service are being tracked will vary according to the levels of regulation, i.e. the different administration level, responsible for monitoring either the quality of service or the costs. To promote the development of distribution networks for water supply, it would be pertinent to align the tracking levels with the appropriate level of regulation.

In Burkina Faso, the main challenge of regulating small piped-system networks (SPNS) is the discrepancy between the type of control/regulation and the level where the main tracking activities (monitoring quality of service and long-term costs) are being performed. SPNS are regulated by prices, but the tracking of costs is an activity performed locally, while the monitoring of water quality is conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, Sanitation and Food Security (MAHASA). Local authorities (municipalities) are simply not able to keep track both of costs and of the service monitoring performed at higher administrative levels (that is currently limited to the verification of the functionality of waterworks annually).

Next steps

To support the development of SPSN, it is recommended to align the tracking activity levels and the levels of administrative control. Support should be given to municipalities or water authorities in their implementation of a direct water quality monitoring service for SPSN. The MAHASA should complement existing data and update knowledge related to costs in order to provide the country's water sector with accurate data on the unit cost and permit better planning and contracting of the water supply service.

There is no reason to continue to systematically put money into water systems that cost more and provide poor or no services. Water delivered by supply network is safe and offers a straightforward way to break the vicious circle of poverty associated to the lack of water, with much more potential than any municipal autonomous boreholes management system (of hand pump type). These boreholes can at best meet survival-level needs (if the water is potable). The water network actually opens the way to

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development. In addition, it is more equitable: it is more accessible to the poor than autonomous boreholes systems.

2. Professional and sustainable infrastructure maintenance: is cooperation between municipalities (intercommunality) the solution?

Despite being prescribed by law, cooperation between municipalities (also known as intercommunality) has not been actively implemented in Burkina Faso. Yet this form of local cooperation, where two or more municipalities could pool resources to tackle specific issues, would allow them to reduce costs and share technical capacity. Intercommunality also opens the door to revenue sharing and additional capacity mobilization.

IRC Burkina Faso took a closer look at the operation of hand pumps in the municipalities of Aribinda and Gorgadji, at the issues hampering, and the solutions ensuring, a reliable service that is also better adapted to the population's needs.

2.1 Why boreholes with hand pumps in the Sahel region break down so often?

Boreholes with hand pumps (also known as improved water sources) are the main source of drinking water in rural areas of Burkina Faso. In one municipality in which IRC Burkina Faso is actively involved, Gorgadji, there are 123 boreholes with hand pumps, of which 88% were working in March 2014. In another, Aribinda, there are 208 such boreholes, of which 89% were working. 8% of the equipment over these two municipalities is more than 30 years old and needs to be replaced. It is calculated that 44% of people have access to such water sources in Gorgadji and 41% in Aribinda (on the basis of 300 people for each borehole with hand pump). Like any infrastructure, these boreholes with hand pumps need regular maintenance.

In the Sahel region, where the Reform on management of public water provision is piloted since 2008, municipalities contract the maintenance of boreholes with hand pumps and the collection of payments from households to the Water Users' Associations (one WUA for each village) and hire local mechanics to carry out preventative and corrective maintenance work.

According to data collected in the Sahel Region, a hand pump has more than a 50 percent chance of breaking down in six months.

While mechanics generally manage to repair them within the set, three-day time limit, in more than half the cases the breakdown recurs. More than 50% of repaired hand pumps break down again, some up to six times. This sharply increases the amount of time a hand pump is unavailable and diminishes users' confidence in the mechanics' ability to do their job. The main reason given by the mechanics to explain this high failure rate is the accessibility and quality of spare parts.

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Table 4: Hand pump breakdowns between October 2013 and April 2014 in Arbinda and Gorgadji

Commune	Number of community hand pumps	Number of hand pumps that broke down	Number of breakdowns	Number of hand pumps that broke down once	Number of hand pumps that broke down twice	Number of hand pumps that broke down 3 to 7 times
Aribinda	202	131	280	48	29	43
Gorgadji	114	68	117	37	21	8

Before a local maintenance cycle was put in place (see chapter 1.1), time to repair was on average 7 days over the two municipalities, with some breakdowns lasting several months. Since the new maintenance cycle has been in operation, breakdown time has been reduced to 3.5 days. Despite this progress, some boreholes with manual pumps cannot be adequately repaired. Local authorities and sector stakeholders give three reasons for this:

1. Limited access to new spare parts;
2. Lack of qualified maintenance skills;
3. Water Users' Associations lack the resources to meet repair costs.

In order to reduce repair times and, ultimately, in order to offer these populations uninterrupted water services, IRC Burkina Faso investigated these assumptions. Our analysis was based on data collected by IRC Burkina Faso between 2012 and 2014. We looked at the types and frequency of breakdowns, repair times, and costs associated with the running of boreholes with hand pumps.

Despite an overall reduction in breakdown length, our analysis showed a direct correlation between the number of breakdowns and repair costs. The higher the number of breakdowns, the higher the repair cost. There are two factors behind this:

1. The difficulty of obtaining new spare parts, which results in widespread use of second-hand parts, which causes further breakdowns;
2. Limited knowledge among maintenance personnel, who do what they can with the available materials.

We also showed that Water Users' Associations (and households') ability to pay is not in itself a limiting factor. Between September 2013 and March 2014, the equivalent of around USD 1,500 was available to

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the local authority in Gorgadji and USD 25,000 in Aribinda. These resources were not mobilized or allocated in an optimal way. Using such sums, Aribinda would have been able to restore 8 boreholes with hand pumps (at an average cost of USD 3,000) and Gorgadji would have been able to maintain 30 boreholes with hand pumps properly (at an average cost of USD 50). In other words, on the basis of contributions collected from households and gathered by Water Users' Associations, both local authorities can afford to have repairs done more professionally, in order to limit the number of breakdowns.

However, if the resources of each Water Users' Associations are to be used effectively, this implies that they should be held in common, in order to achieve equalization. On what level should they be held in common? How can we overcome the deficiencies in the spare part supply chain? How can we ensure that local mechanics are better able to repair boreholes with hand pumps?

Original article written by Christelle Pezon, senior program officer and Amélie Dubé, program officer, IRC.

2.2 Professionalizing maintenance: towards a common solution for the Aribinda and Gorgadji municipalities?

In Burkina Faso, villagers have to contribute 75,000 FCFA per year for each hand pump so that a mechanic can carry out preventive maintenance and any necessary repairs. Each mechanic can be



Hand pump is use, Gorgadji Photo: IRC

responsible for a maximum of 100 hand pumps all within the same district, although this number is usually between 40 and 60. Under the current system there is no supply chain for quality-guaranteed spare parts. If a pump breaks down, the mechanics or village user associations buy spare parts on the market where no process of certification of origin or quality control. And yet this is key to improving the service provided by hand pumps.

Is it possible to improve the service quality for hand pumps without increasing the price paid by users? The answer is: yes! It is possible to improve the quality of service of hand pumps, at a constant rate, i.e. the reasonable price of 250 FCFA per person per year in Burkina Faso. This involves changing the management level, to professionalize maintenance transferring it to a private operator, in a similar way as done for the small piped-network systems.

IRC Burkina Faso looked into management models that would permanently reduce the number and length of breakdowns of boreholes with hand pumps in rural Burkina Faso. We investigated ways of professionalizing the use and

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maintenance of boreholes with hand pumps, while looking for innovative solutions that improve the way in which this infrastructure is maintained, while being adapted to the local context. Such solutions will involve transferring responsibility for maintenance of hand pumps to the local private sector. IRC Burkina Faso therefore funded an exploratory study to learn more about the operating costs and benefits in terms of infrastructure condition, and ultimately in terms of water provision to users. This study was carried out by a local private provider, Faso-Hydro, which is currently operating small piped water schemes in the Sahel region.

Provider's commitments

Three scenarios for professionalizing the maintenance of boreholes with hand pumps were analyzed. All three scenarios required certain preconditions to be met, such as higher infrastructure functionality (meaning that restoration work was necessary in advance) and the inclusion of additional training for existing local mechanics. All three scenarios would oblige the provider to:

- Reduce the number of breakdowns;
- Use new spare parts to carry out repairs;
- Reduce service outages to less than 24 hours;
- Test water quality regularly.

Roles and responsibilities of municipalities, as defined by the Reform of water service management in rural areas, were also evaluated and recommendations were drawn up as to the potential for changing the role of the provider to be an intermediary between Water Users' Associations and the local authority.

Scenarios integrating real costs data

The cost of providing a water service includes repair and maintenance, salaries, a profit margin, and fixed and variable costs. These items were drawn from the experience of Faso-Hydro and national standards. On this basis, the following scenarios were created and summarized in table 5 below.

Scenario 1 relies on the Government's financial regulations (as defined by the Reform documentation). Scenario 2 includes all operating costs (e.g. maintenance and repair, local mechanics who currently work on a voluntary basis and contributions to rehabilitation), while scenario 3 only includes maintenance and repair. The results show a large gap between current pricing (2500 CFA francs/year/household) and the actual costs of a service (14,000 CFA francs/year/household). To bridge this gap, a subsidy system can be designed.

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Table 5: Summary of financial scenarios for improved maintenance of boreholes with hand pumps

Figures in USD (2013)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Contribution to payment of district technician and costs of the District Water and Sanitation Committee	10	18	11
Provisions for major repairs (borehole, superstructure etc.)	0	153	153
Water managers salaries (currently working on a volunteer base)	0	267	0
Misc. costs from WUAs (communications, transport)	0	170	0
Replacement of hand pump spare parts with full warranty	51	94	70
Initial contribution for hand pump rehabilitation	10	18	11
Initial contribution for a new borehole	10	18	11
Margin on variable costs	71	158	114
Total incompressible costs of the operator (including mechanics)	18167		
Total /year	18 318	19 063	18 537
Minimum number of hand pumps to achieve profitability	256	115	160
Annual cost/household	5	28	13

The only condition lies in the size of the contract: the operator would require the market to include at least 256 hand pumps located in the surrounding municipality (Gorgadji and Arbinda). Considering the size of the two areas we studied, there needs to be co-operation between municipalities (also known as intercommunality) if any of these three scenarios are to be financially viable.

The maintenance of the 35,000 operational hand pumps in Burkina Faso represents a market of around 2.625 billion FCFA per year (\$US 5.25 million). This is a large enough market for specialized firms to emerge or develop their services thus helping to improve the level of service and the sustainability of installations. It is simply a matter of changing the scale and, when there are not enough hand pumps in a given district, of exploring the possibility of inter-communality.

Limited interest

Some questions still remain: how and who will guarantee that the preconditions are met? How long should such a contract last? The stakeholders will eventually have to address these questions.

Nevertheless, IRC Burkina Faso believes that professionalizing repair and maintenance could have a real impact on the quality and sustainability of water provision in rural areas.

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This analysis was presented to the relevant municipal stakeholders (e.g. mayors, regional authorities, maintenance professionals) and to a group of national stakeholders at an information-sharing workshop, which took place in July 2014 in Ouagadougou. Reactions were lukewarm at best and there was only tentative interest in the idea of increasing the presence and role of a private provider in managing services. It is important that IRC and its partners improve their advocacy in order to understand why there is so much hesitation and how to overcome this obstacle.

Original article written by Christelle Pezon, senior program officer and Amélie Dubé, program officer, IRC.

3. Advancing the adoption of national approaches

During the four years of the USAID-WA-WASH program and through other programs implemented in Burkina, IRC has collaborated closely with municipalities in the Sahel and the Regional Directorate, especially on the topics of monitoring and evaluation, of hand pump maintenance and of long-term costs of services.

This collaboration resulted in the development of monitoring and evaluation tools and capacity building for operators at both the two administrative levels. It also led to broader exchanges related to technical and financial reforms at the sector level, by sharing data collected by the programs.

In order to ensure the adoption of approaches with scalable solutions, the role of IRC has also been to extend these lessons to the national level, through regular interactions with national actors (the DGRE/MAHASA and technical and financial partners) within the established dialogue frameworks of the sector, at specific events and during special collaborations, such as with the CEMEAU ("Centre des Métiers de l'Eau", or Water Training Center).

Some of the highlights of these discussions and activities carried at the national level are shared in this section.

3.1 A Water Bank to develop water services to all and for life?

The problem: too high a dependence on official development assistance in low-income countries

It took high income countries in Europe and North America about 100 years to universalize the access to tap, safe and unlimited water to all. Starting with dense, industrial or wealthy areas, the development of modern water services slowly reached remote, rural and poor places. Among other challenges these countries had an urgent need for long-term and massive public financing.

Part of this public financing came from the wealth that water services created in cities where they developed in the first place. In France, for instance, a tax was collected on citizens that enjoyed tap water at home in order to serve the unserved population. The more people got water at home, the bigger the total public financing available to reach the more expensive to serve. Looking at rural water

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services in low and middle income countries today, the difference with the progress experience by high income countries is striking.

Governments in low and middle income countries are not investing enough in water services.

Governments are not investing enough in water services³. Investment in the water (and sanitation) sector is largely left to aid agencies that fund 3 to 5 years projects and cannot guarantee long term financing even though this exact same type of financing has been taking place for the last 50 years!

It can be argued that in low and middle income countries governments don't have the required financial resources at hand to invest massively in rural water supply. It can also be argued that priorities change and that the commitment to invest regularly and massively into one sector is quite challenging in a context of competing priorities.



Woman pumping water in Aribinda, Photo: IRC

The approach

There are also factual evidences that, at the moment, the wealth which is being created by increasing access to water supply is also being directed to other priorities. For instance in Burkina Faso US\$10 million were collected on urban water users through VAT last year, but the government is not

³ See this recent report by the World Bank's WASH program: <http://www.wsp.org/content/pathways-progress-status-water-and-sanitation-africa>

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reinvesting this money into the sector, and not into rural water supply. Similarly, when the State is granted a loan for urban water and sanitation services at 6% interest rate by donors, this money is provided to the water utility at an 8% interest rate, generating capital that could be re-invested in the water sector.

The issue of long term financing is not only a matter of new public finance being made available, but it is also a matter of securing the additional capital that the water sector is generating. In the example above, if the VAT was geared towards the development of modern services in rural areas, further capital would be made available thanks to the connection (and the VAT) of a growing number of users which in turn would result in increased public financing available every year.

A possible option for ensuring that taxes generated by the water sector are kept within the water sector as a basis to levy additional capital is to create a sector bank.

How could a sector bank fulfill this mission?

The tax collected on water users could compose the initial capital of this bank which, in the case of Burkina Faso, means a predictable and annual capital of \$10 million per year. On the basis of \$10 million of secured funding per year, a bank should be able to borrow \$40 million on the international market and to pay it back in maximum 5 years. A financing capacity of \$50 million equals the investment that is currently been made by aid agencies and the government in Burkina Faso.

The main advantages for this kind of institution so far include:

1. A bank is an institution submitted to strict accountability and transparency regulations
2. The tax already collected on water users is secured and fully reinvested into the development of modern water services
3. Though the provision of water services is a local issue, the financing of these services is not. Mutualization of funds is required to ensure a sustainable access to the more expensive to serve and up hazard major repair expenditures can be covered wherever needed in a country. Thus a water bank stands as a good mechanism to mutualize funds at country scale.

Such a bank needs a well thought governance structure with a board that can take sound decisions on where and how much to invest. A cooperative bank having on board local authorities responsible for the delivery of water services should be considered.

Part of IRC's international activities is to provide an in-depth examination of these issues.

Original article written by Christelle Pezon, senior program officer, IRC.

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3.2 Sharing tools and experience of municipal monitoring at the country level (training with CEMEAU and recommendations for the PCD-AEPA manual)

Municipalities in Burkina Faso have become the main operators of services for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene as a result of decentralization of these activities and a transfer of assets by the state to local authorities. One of their responsibilities is to develop a Municipal Development Plan specific to drinking water and sanitation, called MCD-WASH. All MCD-WASH will expire at the end of 2015. In 2016, municipalities must revise and improve their Plan for the 2016-2020 period.

In recent years, IRC Burkina Faso is working to improve the monitoring of services related to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in municipalities. With its experience, IRC Burkina Faso wants to help fill some of the gaps in the revised methodological guide for MCD-WASH, by proposing a conceptual framework and related tools for conducting a comprehensive diagnosis of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in each municipality, and for monitoring the results associated with MCD-WASH implementation.



Brainstorming session in Aribinda Photo: IRC

Diagnostic tools for drinking water services have been developed and implemented in eight municipalities in the Sahel region in the WA-WASH project of USAID (2012-2015). Monitoring tools for drinking water services have been implemented since 2012 in two towns in the same region. A diagnosis

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of household hygiene and sanitation practices, and a latrines tracking tool have also been developed and tested as part of the European Union's SaniFaso (2011-2014) and SaniEst (2014-2017) programs.

All these tools have been shared in two ways. First, sharing was done through the development of training on "Governance of WASH services at municipal level" offered by the Water Training Center (CEMEAU). On the strength of its experience in implementing diagnostic and monitoring tools, IRC contributed the following:

- Hands-on tools, that were tested and validated to carry out a diagnosis at the institutional level and an assessment of the performance of WASH services,
- Tools for monitoring over time the performance of these services,
- Restitution mechanisms to enable municipal authorities in their annual planning (procedures, workshop facilitation, validating the longer term operational measures).

One training session, conducted in April and May 2015, enabled more than 70 industry professionals (from the municipal to the national level) to be trained on the governance of WASH services. Knowledge and experience sharing was also facilitated through the consolidation and the sharing-out of all the tools and methods developed by IRC Burkina Faso in a single document. While no MCD-WASH has yet been developed on the basis of the revised methodology guide, it is expected that, from 2016 onwards, the new MCD-WASH will integrate its recommendations, including aspects of equity and fairness and service monitoring.

Original article written in French by Julia Boulenouar, Aguaconsult.

4. Burkina Faso on the world stage

Although each municipality, region or country has unique features defining its social, environmental, economic or political environment, it remains that in most cases, WASH actors face similar issues and challenges when it comes to the sustainability of WASH services.

Issues related to infrastructure maintenance, long-term financing, planning, contracting and to the relevant scales for actions arise in all developing countries and as such, sharing experiences from Burkina Faso not only puts the country on the international stage, but also helps compare its efforts with innovations and challenges of neighboring countries.

As part of the WA-WASH program, two activities have been carried out to meet this objective: the organization of an international seminar on local services monitoring and the organization of an exchange visit to Niger.

4.1 Ouagadougou brainstorming on the monitoring of local water and sanitation services

From 7 to 9 April 2014 more than 200 people from around thirty countries met in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso to share experiences and ideas on the monitoring and evaluation of local water and sanitation services in rural areas and small towns in West Africa. The seminar's objective was to discuss

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approaches implemented in the field and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the sector in this regard.

Main findings

1. *Monitoring and Evaluating Hygiene*

Water and Sanitation projects have only recently begun to take hygiene into account, and the local authorities' role is not always clearly specified. Moreover, monitoring and evaluating hygiene is complex, in particular as regards measuring behavior change such as hand washing. The tools and approaches for monitoring and evaluation are limited to measuring project-led awareness-raising and communication activities which aim to encourage users to adopt good hygiene practices (number of communication campaigns, number of people trained, made aware etc.).

Behavior change requires qualitative monitoring over the long term (five to ten years), which is often much longer than the length of a project. Long-term monitoring tools and mechanisms thus remain to be developed. Collaboration with health sector stakeholders should also be stepped up.

2. *Monitoring and Evaluating Sanitation*

In most contexts, the monitoring and evaluation of sanitation almost exclusively involves measuring the rate of household coverage. In other words, counting latrines is currently the predominant methodology. On the one hand, a way to measure the actual functionality of latrines, and on the other a way to measure to what extent they are actually used by the populations, need to be developed. This will enable the sustainability and quality of access to sanitation services to be measured. Also, the monitoring and evaluation of the removal of waste water and excreta (manual and mechanical pit emptying) and the monitoring and evaluation of waste water treatment are two other essential components that are almost never taken into account by local authorities. It would appear that local stakeholders are sorely lacking in tools, technical skills and financial resources, which prevents them from



Brainstorming during the seminar, Photo: IRC

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monitoring the entire sanitation chain, including access, removal and treatment.

3. Monitoring and Evaluating Stand-alone Water Points

Most stand-alone water points (wells, hand pumps) are monitored through (often sporadic) national infrastructure inventories. As in the case of sanitation, current practice is to identify and locate water points. The quality of service provided by these water points is rarely monitored.

The cash flow generated by stand-alone water points is very low, which partly explains their vulnerability (which often results for instance in long reaction times to breakdowns) and the difficulties in maintaining sustainable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Pooling resources for instance in a region or among several communes would appear to be an idea worth exploring in order to optimize monitoring and evaluation costs. Financial equalization between piped water systems (which mostly generate significant revenues) and stand-alone water points is also raised as a promising approach for financing and implementing sustainable monitoring and evaluation of these water points.

4. Monitoring and Evaluating Small Piped Water Systems

Small piped water networks are technical and complex to manage. Monitoring and evaluation of piped systems is indispensable for the operators because it enables them to optimize management costs, to ensure the financial viability of services and to be accountable to the contracting authorities. In this context, there are many experiences of monitoring and evaluation. Today they use proven tools and have clearly demonstrated their added value in terms of service performance monitoring.

Sector stakeholders are calling for greater commitment by governments to support and accompany the existing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate small piped systems. Despite the success of many experiences of monitoring and evaluation of small piped systems, they remain fragile and support (in particular financial support) from government is frequently necessary but also justifiable. Furthermore, at local level, many communes do not sufficiently or inappropriately take on board the potential offered by small piped system monitoring and evaluation, in particular as regards monitoring contracts and performance levels. Finally, national sector frameworks would do well to make the most of the field data provided by these mechanisms, particularly when updating standards and reference bases.

5. Monitoring and Evaluating User Satisfaction

While monitoring and evaluation initiatives tend to cover issues relating to operations and service sustainability, monitoring of user satisfaction appears much more marginal. Those that do exist today are mainly pilot initiatives, implemented through projects.

The challenge today is to develop simple methods that local authorities can use easily to measure these aspects and to take certain corrective measures if necessary. Furthermore, indicators to measure user satisfaction need to be refined, particularly as regards matters of ease of use, opinions regarding management structures, etc.

6. Monitoring and Evaluating Water Quality

Unlike urban areas where operators (public or private) have both the responsibility and the resources to do so, water quality is not currently monitored systematically in rural areas. Nonetheless, when it is

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monitored (through pilot projects), the results are regularly alarming and indicate water quality problems right at the source, but also highlight contamination during transport and storage.

While research proclaims to offer simple tools to measure water quality, it is important to adapt these methods to rural realities, to take into account their complexity and cost, and the human resources necessary to analyze and use the results.

7. The Role of ICT in Monitoring and Evaluation

The water sector today is brimming with innovations based on mobile phone technologies (MWater, M4Water, AKVO-FLOW etc.), which make it possible to visualize service functionality in real time, reducing data gathering time, improving data transmission and reducing service outage times and monitoring costs (up to 30% in Senegal and Benin).

However, the real benefits of using these technologies depends on i) the institutionalization of a monitoring system and its tools, ii) the clarity of indicators and iii) the analysis capacities of the competent authorities. Furthermore, recourse to such technologies raises various difficulties, in particular the need for access to the Internet, the centralization and storage of the data gathered, the sharing of information among the different stakeholders, etc.

8. The Costs and Financing of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation clearly has a cost, which is very rarely systematically or completely understood. Usually, the initial implementation cost can be easily identified, unlike the recurrent, support and updating costs. Without specific knowledge of these costs it is difficult to identify sustainable sources of funding. Some considerations should be taken into account. Firstly, stakeholders who have a vested interest in monitoring and evaluation are more favorably disposed towards contributing to financing it (users for transparency and the price of water; operators to better control operating costs; local authorities to better control service provision and; the government for regulation). Secondly, it is not reasonable to expect water fees to cover the cost of government's monitoring responsibilities, which should be covered by the public authorities. Finally, having external and intermittent sources of financing for monitoring and evaluation (projects, donors) goes against the very premises of sustainability.

Original synthesis compiled by IRC and Ps-EAU.

4.2 Exchange visit in Niger

In Niger, the management of small piped water networks has for years been fully delegated to private operators. The result, in general, is a more professional management dynamic and an increased performance of services to users.

In order to improve the management of small piped water networks in Burkina Faso, IRC offered its support in the organization of a technical exchange visit in June 2014, between, on one hand, the Burkinabe government's departments in charge of policy, representatives from the municipality of

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Gorgadji and a private operator (Hydro-Faso), and, on the other hand, the Nigerien actors responsible for the management of public drinking water services in rural and semi-urban areas in Niger.

The mission

The visit took place from 2 to 8 June 2014 and resulted in a series of meetings from the national to the local level. It was held to discuss the strategic vision of the rural sector and the management of small piped water networks, as well as to identify the challenges the sector is currently facing and define priorities for the future.

Through meetings with Nigerien officials at all levels, the delegation's members from Burkina Faso were able to understand the following:

- The priorities of Niger's water policy, which are i) the prioritization of small piped water networks over the development of boreholes equipped with hand pumps, and ii) the development of multi-village water supply services from surface water or groundwater to reap benefits (investment optimization, economic efficiency, convenience of service) and tackle constraints (scarcity of funds);
- The main existing tools used in the technical and financial planning of services;
- The main challenges facing national, regional and municipal technical services, especially in terms of human capacity;
- The Issues related to the annual municipal planning within the PLEA ("*Plan local d'eau potable et d'assainissement*", or Local Plan for Water and Sanitation);
- The current thinking on the role of intermunicipal (intercommunality) in the management of services.

The technical exchange also allowed the Burkinabe delegation to present the experience of Burkina Faso and the various issues the sector's players are currently facing.

As a result, it was decided that i) the establishment of advisory support services for technical and financial monitoring of small piped water networks, ii) the grouping a large number of small piped water networks under one single operator (following a prior baseline study), and iii) building multi-village small piped water networks in sedimentary areas – particularly in the upper basins area –, would benefit Burkina Faso immensely.

Moreover, the creation of two private financing accounts for the renewal and expansion of facilities and for the municipal fee collection is very good initiative. However, to avoid the irregularities in the payment of royalty as is the case in Niger, appropriate enforcement mechanisms must be created to ensure operators comply with the commitments of the contract.

From this visit, and seeing the large amounts of money generated despite the delays in payment, we think that "water can finance water" if it is well managed. For this, we recommend i) a debriefing meeting of this visit to the DGRE/MAHARA, ii) a national workshop for sharing the experiences from

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Niger, iii) the establishment of a committee watching over the implementation of the lessons learned abroad, and iv) taking into account these experiences in post-2015 strategic policy documents.

Original report written by Richard Bassono, research officer, IRC Burkina Faso.

Outlook

The WA-WASH project ends in September 2015, and, after a four year partnership with municipalities, positive results that exceed the "classic" physical achievements of many such projects, are being shared by the actors. Municipalities now have a monitoring and evaluation system which reinforces their mandate as service operators by allowing them to follow the drinking water services over their territory with tools adapted to their capacity. In general, the sector's knowledge base on aspects such as the long-term costs of services and funding has been enriched, and brainstorming is active on finding the alternatives to conventional financing and the most adapted maintenance scales. Because the project aimed to build long-term capabilities of the actors, it resonated well with the realities of Burkina Faso's institutional context. In fact, it dealt successfully with the existing structural deficiencies and abrupt political change that affected the country during its implementation.

The first element taken into account during project implementation was the staff shortage at both municipal and regional levels. Whether in creating or strengthening the capacity for coordination and monitoring and evaluation, the project's technical assistants had limited room to effectively deal with the sporadic presence of local staff and their loose commitment to the improvement process.

IRC's intervention also had to contend with the political changes of November 2014 that led to the dissolution of municipal councils that were replaced by special delegations with limited mandate. This dissolution had a profound impact on development projects' implementation, by causing a reevaluation of the protocols signed between the Financial and Technical Partners and the former municipal councils, especially when it came to the social mobilization actions the municipalities were in charge of.

Like IRC, the sector had to innovate to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project's achievements. This is particularly true of WaterAid which rapidly set up mitigation plans in its intervention territory, or Eau-Vive, which relied on partnerships with the Village Development Councils (VDCs, "*Conseils Villageois de Développement*"). "In the absence of municipal councils, we have a tremendous asset that could help us with social mobilization activities. This asset is the VDCs, which have the advantage of having deep local presence and stronger sustainability," said Francis Kologo, of Eau Vive, at a workshop held in Ouagadougou in December 2014.

Although the current arrangement of the Triple-S initiative is drawing to a close, IRC Burkina Faso remains committed. The initiative launched by the WASHCost project in 2008, and pursued by WA-WASH since 2012, has allowed IRC to develop sustainable partnerships with the municipalities that were able to improve the provision of sustainable water and sanitation services. In this undertaking, IRC is to remain in the country and will continue to mobilize financing for the continuation of its medium and long-term commitments.

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Additional resources

"*Contribution au guide méthodologique du PCD AEPA 2016-2030*", available on IRC's website

<http://fr.ircwash.org/resources/contribution-au-guide-m%C3%A9thodologique-du-pcd-aeпа-2016-2030>

"*Le suivi-évaluation des services locaux d'eau et d'assainissement dans les zones rurales et villes secondaires en Afrique de l'ouest -Synthèse et enseignements*", available on IRC's website

<http://fr.ircwash.org/resources/le-suivi-%C3%A9valuation-des-services-locaux-d%E2%80%99eau-et-d%E2%80%99assainissement-dans-les-zones-rurales>

"*Module 7 – Gouvernance du Centre des métiers de l'eau de l'ONEA–CEMEAU*". More information

<http://cemeau.blogspot.nl/>

"*Pezon, C., 2013, Coût, performance et régulation des petits réseaux d'approvisionnement en eau potable au Burkina Faso - Étude de six AEPS dans la région du Sahel*", available on IRC's website

<http://fr.ircwash.org/resources/co%C3%BBt-performance-et-r%C3%A9gulation-des-petits-r%C3%A9seaux-de-distribution-d%E2%80%99eau-potable-au-burki-0>

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