WASHCOST TOOL

The WASHCost tool is an open-source tool designed to be used by governments, donors and implementing organisations to assess and compare the financial sustainability of different water and sanitation services and share those findings with different stakeholders. It was developed out of the experiences of WASHCost, a five year action research initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which collected data on the life-cycle costs of different WASH services in four countries: India, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mozambique. The processes and knowledge gained from WASHCost were applied to this web-based tool, which allows the user to share the life-cycle costs of their planned and existing water and sanitation services and also to do some basic life-cycle costs analysis. It provides an interface to explore and save changes in expenditure, service levels and affordability. The tool provides first time users and non-experts the ability to perform expenditure and service level analyses. It takes only minutes to fill out the online questionnaire, but the total level of effort required to utilise the tool is based on the availability of cost data for the area of concern.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Target: WASH sector stakeholders (e.g. donors, implementers, governments, WASH planners, managers, analysts).

Objectives: To aid users to effectively plan, budget, manage and evaluate the delivery of water and sanitation services using a life-cycle costs approach. The tool helps stakeholders consider what the expected capital and recurrent expenditures will be for different technologies and service levels.

Areas: Context, cost, and service level.

Indicators: There are 9 indicators for water and 10 indicators for sanitation. These include context (country, population, and technology), cost (capital and recurrent), and those for service levels. For sanitation the service level indicators include: latrine technology, permeability, environmental impact, usage, and reliability. For water the service level indicators are: access, quantity, quality, and reliability.

Methodology: The user inputs data describing context and expenditures currently made on water and sanitation interventions. The inputs are compared with WASHCost benchmarks for a stated technology. Finally, the user inputs information that is used to determine the service levels.

Outputs: Summary reports are produced that can also be saved to a user dashboard or shared via a web-link. These reports contain information on the capital and recurrent expenditures (total and per person) that are presented against a service level categorisation determined using WASHCost benchmarks: high, standard, sub-standard, and no service for water, and improved, basic, limited, and no service for sanitation.

Tool format and language: Web-based; English and French.

Resource Link: http://www.ircwash.org/washcost

IMPACT AND FINDINGS

The sharing function of the basic tool provides an easy to interpret report, which can be used to communicate basic expenditure and service level information. These reports can be modified, which allows people to explore the impact of changing the values. An advanced version of the tool is being developed that will provide more detailed risk assessments (e.g. affordability and asset management) as well as estimates of potential costs over time and value for money on targeted investments, which will be based on benchmarks and calculated capital maintenance expenditure. The advanced tool will have the capacity to link to third party information systems so that reports can be generated automatically.

Strengths	Limitations
Simple user interface	Cost benchmark ranges are based on data from 4 pilot countries at the moment and may not be analogous to all situations/contexts
Presents user inputted cost and service level information that is easy to interpret	
Reports can be saved in an online dashboard and shared	Quality/utility of the results are based on accuracy and detail of user inputted data