IMPROVING HEALTH AT SCHOOLS THROUGH FRANCHISING OF WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES

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Workshop: Shortcutting historical pollution trends

? The topic doesn't readily fit any of the eight workshop areas. Partly, I would say, because, after having briefly flirted with sanitation, the Water Week has gone back to being only about water (including water pollution). Anyway -- whatever the reason for it being difficult to do so, we need to find a workshop. Because the "call for papers" states (page 15): "abstracts not clearly addressed to a specific workshop will not be considered".

Keywords: water, sanitation, operation and maintenance, franchising partnerships, South Africa

General fields of interest:

- water and governance/policy
- water and sanitation systems/infrastructure

Abstract

"Introduction/problem identification"

Max 1000 characters ("characters" includes spaces)

Have 926

Some areas of the developing world have seen an increasingly poor and often unacceptable quality of water and sanitation service. The reason for this is invariably inadequate arrangements and incentives for operation and maintenance (O&M) -- including not just skills shortfalls, budget shortfalls and sometimes inadequate design and/or construction, but weak institutional arrangements, and unwillingness, or inability, to change.

Improved institutional and financial mechanisms, where corporate, social and ethical responsibilities are given due attention, are needed. An important aspect would be how to increase positive incentives -- part of this must be the measurement of performance, and a system for rewarding on the basis of that performance.

A franchising partnership model for the planned maintenance of water services infrastructure is now being tested and evaluated in South Africa.

"Analysis/results and implications for policy and/or research"

Max 5000 characters ("characters" includes spaces) Have 4725

Ongoing work by the Water Research Commission (WRC) of South Africa and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) finds that franchising partnerships for operation and maintenance could alleviate and address many challenges in the management of water and sanitation services. Generically, franchising:

- transfers appropriate skills transfer to local personnel,
- brings ongoing performance measurement and support, and mentoring and quality control, and
- provides backup at-a-distance skills together with the incentive, on the part of the local microenterprise (franchisee) personnel, to call for those at-a-distance skills and, on the part of the franchisor, to make them available, because there is a binding contract between them and a shared reputation.

The partnerships would involve three parties -- that is, franchisor, franchisee and the owner of the water services infrastructure. The main incentive of the franchisor and franchisee to perform is, frankly, that their livelihood depends on it.

Many opportunities lie in the franchising of parts of the water and sanitation services value chain -- of activities suitable for microenterprises inter alia in that they can be readily systematised. A selection of these has been modeled by WRC and CSIR, and is being made available to emerging entrepreneurs as the basis of viable businesses.

The water services and health environment of many schools in South Africa is very poor. Interventions at schools not only lead to safer environment for pupils, but are investments -- pupils at schools with good water supply and sanitation are sick less often than those without, and are thus able to attend school more regularly. But, also, pupils take back to their homes the good practices they have learned at school.

An innovative programme whereby emergent microenterprises are trained and mentored to clean and maintain water and sanitation facilities at schools is being piloted in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The programme is one of partnerships founded on skills and incentives principles akin to those of franchising.

This pilot got under way early in 2009. The CSIR and the East London-based Amanz'abantu Services (Pty) Ltd, funded by Irish Aid through the WRC, are providing policy, technical and other assistance necessary to facilitate the pilot programme. Locally-based microenterprises -- trainee franchisees -- are working in partnership with the franchisor Impilo Yabantu which has been set up by Amanz'abantu. Impilo Yabantu has provided training and has assisted the microenterprises with setting up their businesses. It is now mentoring them, and will offer further training as and when necessary.

The services which the franchisees are providing to the schools are being paid for by the schools from their budgets annually allocated for operation and maintenance of infrastructure.

Progress with cleaner sanitation facilities and improved hygiene in the schools that form part of the pilot project is already evident. Emphasis is on the quality and reliability of the service, and the viability of the franchisor and franchisees.

The CSIR is monitoring the progress of the pilot, and will in due course disseminate results with a view to replication of the franchising partnerships concept in the operation and maintenance of other types of water and sanitation facilities.

Water services infrastructure owned by municipalities offers many opportunities. The incentive to municipalities to reform their current often inadequate provision for quality service delivery is the increasing pressure from the South African national Department of Water Affairs, which is threatening to prosecute authorities that do not comply with the legislated requirements for safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.

In a franchising partnership setup, the help of the franchisor would be of particular value away from the major urban centres. For example -- few rural municipalities in South Africa can afford to employ competent qualified staff, and this directly results in periodic unreliability of supply and frequent non-compliance with national standards relating to, for example, wastewater treatment works effluent quality. Significant improvements would soon be seen if the generally under-qualified and under-resourced water and sanitation services staff could have this ongoing support, mentoring and quality control -- or if the municipality could partner with microenterprises and/or community-based organisations which would, through franchising partnerships, enjoy the necessary ongoing support, mentoring and quality control from the franchisor, and would have quick access to skilled assistance when they needed it.

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"How does the proposed paper advance knowledge of / innovation within the subject?" Max 300 Have xxx

Applying franchising partnership principles to O&M of water and sanitation is highly innovative. It is being pioneered by SA local partners, with help from Irish Aid.

Franchise service providers, dependent for their livelihood on the success of their business, have strong incentive to perform.

"What are the practical applications of the contents of the proposed paper?" *Max 300 Have xxx*

Franchising is especially suited to O&M of schools' water and sanitation which, in South Africa, is often in a dire state. Other activities evidently suitable for microenterprise franchisees include municipal meter management, plumbing, sewer maintenance, and operation of small treatment plants.

"What is the replicability of the procedures or practices described in the proposed paper?"

Max 300

Have xxx

There is in South Africa immense potential for franchising partnerships for water and sanitation services operation and maintenance. All team members believe that the concept can be replicated elsewhere, and in respect of other services.

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"Short biography of the main author"

(Not more than 1000 characters) Have 573

Dr Kevin Wall, who has worked at senior level for a consulting engineer and a large municipality, is a Fellow of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South Africa. A civil engineer and a registered town planner, he is a past national President of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE).

He specialises in policy and strategy formulation to assist government to more effectively deliver, and manage, infrastructure services. He is leading the WRC research on the franchising of water services operation and management.