

Making Systems Work: Local government approaches to improving WASH service delivery in Malawi



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Water Context: Malawi

- Persistent functionality gap nationally (27% non-functional water points)
- Average population of districts is about 500,000, covering an average land area of 3,500km, and 2000 rural water points
- District Water Offices typically have 3 to 5 extension staff and receive an average monthly operational budget of \$400 USD (~\$0.0008 USD/inhabitant)

“No Resources” - The Scapegoat

Non-financial challenges:

- Projects over routine
- Technical skills over management
- Training without ongoing mentorship
- Poor coordination
- NGOs financially distort the system



Lack of resources: the common scapegoat



Objectives

- Shift the mind-set within government more broadly to be one of “Tingathe” (“We Can”)
- Support district leaders to re-design systems to fit within resource constraints (financial and human)- “radical simplicity”
- Support NGOs to better design projects for institutional sustainability





Approach

- Worked directly with 25 district government water development offices
 - Idea development, designing and implementing the pilot, iterative process, mentorship
 - **Non-financial support**
- Building peer-to-peer connections and sector coordination and learning
- Developing specific recommendations for NGOs about project design

Results

1. Designing systems within district government resource constraints
 - Fuel, linking activities
 - Forms: 62 USD -> 2 USD per month



Results



2. Supporting community structures in management roles

- Hand Pump Mechanics, community Development Committees

3. Building strong district teams

- Common vision, distributed management





Lessons Learned

- Less is more- radical simplicity in low-resource environments
- Embedded support from idea to pilot and arms-length support from pilot to scale
- NGOs and projects are undermining their own sustainability without realising it



Conclusion

- Government practitioners
 - Pushing past the resource barrier- radical approaches
 - From a focus on reporting to learning
- NGOs implementing WASH
 - Differentiate establishment vs. long-term ongoing management roles
 - Design and implement for post-project context



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