How water kiosks can improve access to water for the urban poor

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Kenya Case Study

Approxiately 20% of Kenya’s population of 30 million live in urban centres, with three million people living in Nairobi.

Key recommendations

The introduction of new ownership arrangements between water utilities and SWEs will irreversibly change existing institutional arrangements. It is therefore crucial that local institutional arrangements are strengthened to ensure that new arrangements are effective and sustainable. The roles of SWEs are complex, and local arrangements are needed to allow them to thrive.

Fear of legal action

Protein-rich foods for local residents

Kenya’s urban water supply system has evolved over many years, but it has failed to keep pace with demographic and economic growth. Informal settlements have mushroomed in urban areas, and have had to develop their own arrangements for water delivery. The use of SWEs has been a significant contribution to the provision of water in these areas. However, legal and institutional arrangements have failed to keep pace, and there is a need for increased legal support in the form of legal advice and guidance.

SWEs have not yet developed effective ways of managing the risks and costs associated with their operations. This is a key challenge for SWEs as they seek to expand their operations and increase their service coverage.

Introduction

In many low-income towns and cities, large numbers of people live in informal settlements that are poorly served by piped water networks. Historically, they have been served by small-scale informal services, which have not been able to offer legitimate services to the urban poor.

SWEs can contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and have a potential role in generating additional revenues. However, there are concerns about the impact of SWEs on the provision of quality services, and there is a need for more research on this topic.

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How water kiosks can improve access to water for the urban poor

Headline facts

In locations where water utility services are not available, SWEs have shown that they can provide better access to water than traditional piped networks. For example, the introduction of water kiosks in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, has resulted in: improving access to water for the urban poor, increasing the availability of water for the poor, and raising the standard of water supply. In addition, water kiosks can provide additional benefits, such as contributions to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and improved water supply and sanitation.

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cultivating relationships built on trust.

Incentives may come from a variety of drivers: from the profitability of kiosks, to encouraging customers to use alternative supplies, which can be particularly important in areas where the utility supply is inadequate or intermittent. The utility should have sufficient resources to meet the demand for piped water supplies, and be able to maintain acceptable water quality, co-operation and understanding about who has responsibility for maintaining each section of the connecting pipe. Both the utility and the kiosk operator will work to minimise the risks from damage, and loss of water from pipes for which they have responsibility. The community may be expected to help protect the pipeline from damage, in return for the benefit that they receive from the water supply.

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A functional reutilisation system

Pipes of kiosks are designed to achieve an existing water distribution system, capable of supplying water to the community along new connecting pipes.

What are Small Water Enterprises?

More than half of the urban population in some parts of Africa, Asia and South America live in informal settlements with water supplies.

Key components of effective water kiosk services

Water services may be extended beyond the immediate vicinity of the kiosk. Utility staff can expect to see some cost recovery for any investment in a competitive business which may not be profitable. Ultimately a balance needs to be struck between the need for affordability and the expectations of customers and investors.

The existing water distribution system in Dar es Salaam has an obligation to provide water services to informal settlements. Additional incentives have been introduced to encourage informal water users to use existing water services. Additional incentives have been introduced to encourage informal water users to use existing water services.

The utility should be sufficiently flexible to meet new areas of activity, supplying water to a new type of customer. In some cases, informal settlements may be the most cost-effective way of extending services to populations that are currently beyond the reach of the utility. The community may be expected to help protect the pipeline from damage, in return for the benefit that they receive from the water supply.

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