WATER & SANITATION
SERVICES AS HUMAN RIGHTS

THE MANUAL

Each step explained

INTRO

1. By signing up to the Sustainable Development Goals, your country has committed to make sure everybody will have and use good, sustainable services for water and sanitation by 2030 – no matter where they live or who they are. Good services means that everyone can access them, can afford the costs of the service, and that the service is safe and acceptable for all users.

2. Government is responsible for ensuring that this commitment becomes a reality, as quickly as possible, using all possible financial and human resources. As a local government official, you are the most important player in making this happen in your district.

3. Some tried and tested human rights principles can guide you:

- In order to reach everybody, you need to particularly consider from the outset the needs of people who have the worst services, especially those who are poor or marginalised. **This is based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination.**
- You need to make information about water and sanitation services and plans for any changes freely available to everyone affected. Use relevant languages and media. **This is based on the principle of access to information.**
- You need to make sure people can participate in decisions about water and sanitation services, so you can understand how to meet their needs. **This is based on the principle of participation.**
- In order to address problems quickly, you need to make sure that people can report any problems with their water and sanitation services and service providers carry out regular checks. **This is based on the principle of accountability.**
- You need to make sure that services are sustainable, so that water and sanitation services keep running every day of the year and will continue to do so in the long term. **This is based on the principle of sustainability.**

You can make a big difference as a key player in your institution. This manual shows how you can use these principles in your daily work.

A

HOW TO START: ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

1. Your institution plays the coordinating role and is responsible for assessing and analysing who has access to what type of water and sanitation service in your district. This provides the basis for all your work. Find out: In your district, who is least likely to have or use good, sustainable services for water and sanitation? These are the people who most need your attention to make sure that services really reach everyone. Look at households, public places such as schools, health facilities, marketplaces, transport hubs.

Then

2. Analyse
Understand what the challenges are to reaching those people who are least likely to have services. Are these related to social, institutional, financial, environmental, legal, technical or capacity issues? What can you do to address these challenges? Different challenges need different solutions.

In doing this assessment and analysis, seek assistance and input from others who have relevant information, such as community representatives, service providers, civil society organisations and donors. Seek the views of people who use services in their homes and in public places. Their participation will help you understand the challenges from all perspectives.

Use monitoring information from any institutions that are gathering data locally or at the national level about service levels and functionality. Make sure that you have data on who is least likely to have services and why this is so. Do the best you can to get a full picture.

Ensure that data is collected, checked and used to prepare clear information that you can share with others, including the public.

This data is your foundation for all decisions about water and sanitation services.

Try not to get distracted by other demands around you, including those from important people. Be prepared to explain why this is vital to your work!

For this you need

3. Money
How much money can you mobilise from your budget and elsewhere to do assessment and analysis? How can you combine your own resources with those from others, so that you get the best possible information. Since you know who else is working in your area, you can use their assessment and analysis. If you don't have enough money for gathering information, you need to make the case to show people with influence how important it is and why you can't achieve results without it.

What have you learnt
about the situation of the people least likely to have or use water and sanitation services? What do you know about the social factors as well as the institutional or technical challenges they face? What are your initial ideas for addressing these challenges?

Next step:
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B

PLANNING: SET THE TARGETS AND PRIORITIES

1. You are responsible for planning water and sanitation services in your district, so that everyone will have services. Use your evidence from assessment and analysis to set priorities and targets. You will need to organise the work so that all stakeholders can work well together. Do your best to involve everyone responsible for implementing the work in the planning. Make sure the people with authority are involved.

2. Ensure that the plan prioritises and addresses the needs of those without access to services.

3. You need to balance the needs with the available resources to address the biggest challenges. This is the best way to reach the goal of everyone having and using good, sustainable services for water and sanitation as quickly as possible, using all available resources.

4. Consider how you can best use your allocated budget to cover both capital investment and operation and maintenance costs. Use all resources you can access. This may include taxes, tariffs, transfers and in-kind support. Tariffs must always be affordable for people, so you need to understand what they can pay and how to support people who cannot pay. Make sure service users can participate in agreeing tariffs.

You set targets and priorities during planning and budgeting periods, and again when there are new opportunities or political directives. Limited resources mean you cannot do everything at once, but you can make real progress step by step if you focus on the most difficult challenges and persuade others to support you. If you set realistic but ambitious targets this will help you to attract more investment.

You will need to use all of your social skills as well as your authority to bring stakeholders together. As others learn to trust you, coordination will be easier. You have the overview of who is doing what and must keep everyone on track.

Share the plan with the public. People will be happy to know what services they can expect and what steps you are taking to reach the goal of services for all as quickly as possible.

Your plan, with clear targets and priorities, is the basis for:

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C

IMPLEMENTATION: COLLABORATION AND COMMITMENT

1. Your institution plays the coordinating role for running sustainable services in your district. Make sure there is a particular person or organisation responsible for each aspect of the work to be done. Seek commitments through agreements or contracts so that the roles and responsibilities of all involved are clear from the start.

2. Make sure that agreements or contracts clearly spell out the standards expected for services. The standards need to make sure that water and sanitation services will be "good" for the service users – accessible, affordable, safe and acceptable to everyone, depending on their needs and situations. Every responsible partner needs to understand the standards for the services to ensure compliance.

3. Make sure you understand the laws and regulations that apply to services and the procedures for enforcement, and make these clear to partners. Do you need new rules or by-laws to help enforce the standards? If you think changes in national policies or standards are needed to improve services, see how you can raise this with national government, calling in support from other stakeholders.

4. When looking for partners to implement each aspect of the plan, consider their motivation and capacity to follow human rights principles. This will help to ensure everyone pulls in the same direction.

5. There are many different types of partner, including other government institutions, different types of service provider, community groups, civil society organisations and others. You need to understand what different partners are capable of and how you can help to strengthen them. Allocate tasks in accordance with responsibilities as well as capabilities, so the work can progress as smoothly as possible.

6. What mechanisms are in place to make sure that everyone fulfils their responsibilities? You need to make sure that service users know what to expect from service providers and that they can report any problems. This will support you to ensure that services are sustainable and service providers accountable.

7. You will need a small, but reliable budget to set up and manage partnerships. You will need regular meetings to coordinate the work.

Make sure all the stakeholders understand and agree to their different roles and responsibilities. This includes government, community representatives, non-governmental actors, private sector and other support agencies. Existing task groups for water and sanitation can provide the structure to do this. Talk to the different players. Listen to them. Map out the process for planning and implementing services and define the different roles and tasks. Agree who can do what based on their expertise and motivation. You may need to negotiate if there are disagreements. Use your plan to help everyone focus on how you can work together to achieve your goal.

This clarity about roles and responsibilities will enable everyone to do their job and to know what is expected of each stakeholder. It provides the basis for accountability and will help to develop a sense of collective responsibility. It will also make it easier for new partners to join and add their support.

This will enable you to develop a critical mass of people and organisations working effectively together to ensure everyone has good, sustainable services for water and sanitation. "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Agreement on the roles and responsibilities is the basis for:

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D

SUPERVISION AND MONITORING

1. Your institution plays the coordinating role for supervising compliance with standards. Make sure that you can continually assess whether you are on track to implement the plan and that others fulfil their responsibilities.

2. It is important to supervise the technical quality of the water and sanitation services, as well as the way in which services are delivered. Use the guiding principles to make sure services are provided to everyone as quickly as possible. These are equality, access to information, participation, accountability and sustainability.

3. Keep coordinating the work through regular meetings, using any existing water or sanitation task groups. Take stock and reflect. If standards are not being followed, or if you see the quality of services is inadequate then find a way to address the problems together with other stakeholders. Where necessary you may need to use your authority to enforce the standards using laws, regulations and contracts.

4. Use community feedback processes and complaint mechanisms to find out about problems with the services from people who are using them. Combine this with any independent monitoring and your own on-site supervision. This will demonstrate that you are responsible and accountable to the people using the services.

5. It is important to create the possibility of confidential feedback, so people are not afraid of making complaints.

6. Share updates with the public and with partners, so that everybody knows how implementation of the plan is progressing and what you are doing to deal with any problems.

7. Consider how you can improve services over time through capacity building and training for service providers and other important players. Use and mobilise resources for capacity development, including in-kind support by others.

8. Consider how you can best use your allocated budget for capacity development. As well as prudently using the budget you have, consider the expertise you have within your team and the expertise your partners can contribute.

Supervision and monitoring are ongoing tasks. Periodically you will also need to carry out a more comprehensive review to check compliance, assess progress and reflect. This will alert you and the other stakeholders to any changes or challenges that mean you have to adapt your plans. By checking and resolving problems you will show that you are accountable to service users, government, tax payers and donors. Your commitment to clear standards and high-quality services – including hardware and social aspects – will produce results and you will receive more support.

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RESULTS

Service providers
know their customers and can serve them better.

People will be happy
to know what services they can expect and how they are going to get them. They will be more willing to pay for a service they can rely on and trust.

People will have good, sustainable services
for water and sanitation, which will improve their lives.

Your leadership provides a model for others,
by reaching everyone with services, including the most hard to reach.

You can
hold service providers and other actors to account for the quality of the services they provide.

You will demonstrate
how coordination and collaboration lead to better use of resources.

Monitoring
will help you keep your plan on track.

You will mobilise more support
because you are doing a good job, even when there are competing interests.

LEARN MORE

For more information, look at the Handbook on realising the human rights to water and sanitation: **http://www.righttowater.info/handbook/**

The Handbook has different chapters: The principles of the rights, financing, planning, monitoring and accountability, as well as legal frameworks. It also includes many examples of good practices and practical checklists. The book is available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic.

ABOUT THESE MATERIALS

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