

Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Poverty Diagnostic

A Global Initiative Aiming to Have Local Impact

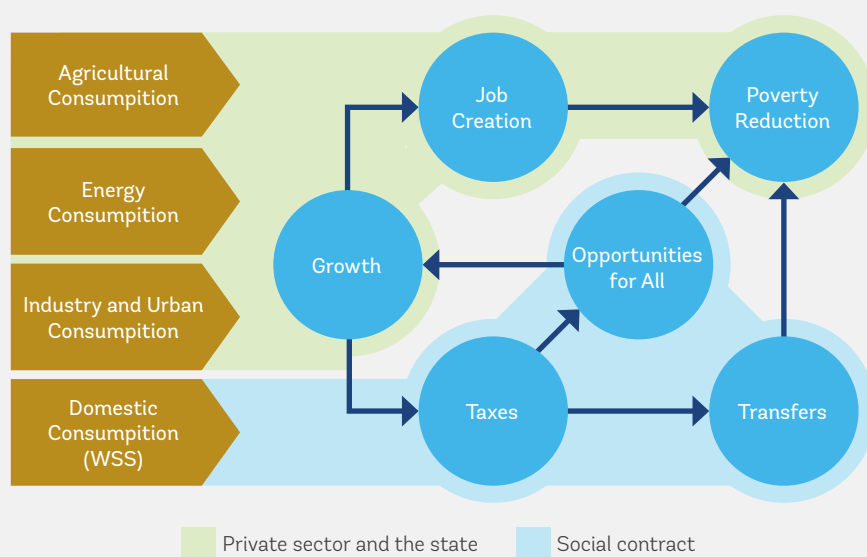
BRIEF

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Motivation

In 2013, the World Bank adopted the twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity, which has required the Water Global Practice along with other Global Practices to internalize these goals in their programs. The goal of shared prosperity is defined formally as the aim of fostering the per capita income growth of the poorest 40 percent (“Bottom 40%”) of people in each country. This goal is underpinned by the provision of equal opportunities to basic services such as education, health, water supply and sanitation that also form the basis for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015. The Water Global Practice’s contribution to the Bank’s goal of shared prosperity (and the Sustainable Development Goals) can be generalized through Figure 1 with water for agriculture, energy, and industry contributing to economic growth and job creation, while water consumption for domestic purposes—water supply and sanitation—can be viewed as part of the state’s social contract to ensure equal opportunity for all of citizens.

Figure 1: Pathways for Shared Prosperity and the Water Sector’s Contribution



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Developing an evidence base on inequality and services to the poor and vulnerable to inform policy dialogue and programming.

Developing new methods to understand inequality in WASH services and spill overs to inequality in outcomes such as health.

Using multi-disciplinary teams to understand binding constraints and solutions to service delivery.

Informing and building local capacity to track Sustainable Development Goal #6.

What is the WASH Poverty Diagnostic?

The WASH Poverty Diagnostic is a global initiative that aims to have local impact by understanding the extent to which the social contract for delivering WASH services is working for all—particularly the poor and vulnerable—and if it not, who is not benefiting and why? The initiative ultimately aims to better understand binding constraints in service delivery, and search for solutions that are both technically and politically feasible to overcome them. Results from this initiative are intended to be public goods to inform country level policy dialogue and programming as well as the methods and frameworks for broader consumption by a variety of specialists.

How Does it Work?

The initiative starts with a country focus and is guided by four core questions:

- Who and where are the poor and vulnerable populations? (Using government national definitions)
- What is their level of access and quality of WASH services as compared to better off segments of society? That is, are services failing the poor and vulnerable populations or are they also failing the non-poor?
- What are the linkages with inadequate WASH services and human development indicators such as health? Do inequalities in WASH services contribute to or exacerbate inequalities in outcomes such as health or education?
- What are the binding constraints to improve the quality of services for those who lack them? And what is the role that institutions play in service delivery?

While these questions appear straight forward, getting to the answers is challenging. In order to respond to the complexity, multi-disciplinary teams including staff from the World Bank's Water, Poverty, Health, and Governance Global Practices have been formed at both the global and country level to draw effectively on the expertise available in the Bank. Some of these teams are also supported by a consortium comprised of Oxford Policy and Management, Overseas Development Institute, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the University of Florida.



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In answering the questions above, teams draw upon and make use of the best available information that exists, and in some cases are collecting new data. For the first three questions, significant efforts are going into mining and harmonizing data from a series of national representative surveys drawing upon Living Standard and Measurement Surveys (LSMS), Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), census data, and other socio-economic surveys. These efforts are linking official poverty and demographic statistics for any given country with information on access to and quality of WASH services to understand inequalities at the lowest administrative unit possible. Through the World Bank's Poverty Global Practice, this initiative is also directly engaging with national statistical offices on how to improve data collection on WASH services to improve tracking of Sustainable Development Goal #6.

The initiative is using econometric methods and piloting modeling techniques to better articulate the linkages between inequality in access to WASH services and how that inequality can spill over and contribute to inequality in outcomes such as health.

Answers to the first three questions takes teams to the next logical question of understanding binding constraints to service delivery in one or more of the WASH sub-sectors—urban water, urban sanitation, rural water, and rural sanitation. While the initiative focuses primarily on the service delivery failures to the poor and the bottom 40% (B40), it is likely that there will be countries/sub-sectors characterized by a more general breakdown of services.

Sector practitioners have a very good understanding of the technical issues that typically impede good performance. For example, there is considerable knowledge of the characteristics of well-performing “utilities”, and enabling environment factors within the sector; however, there has been less attention and understanding of the governance environment and public sector management that might be impeding the provision of better services to the poor/B40 (or across the board).

Since the public sector plays an important role in the provision of these services, the capacity of the state and organizations within it and the existing institutional arrangements and practices in various aspects of public sector management (for example, policy making, public financial management, public investment management, human resource management, intergovernmental arrangements) have an impact on service provision including WASH services. Beyond this, the broader “governance” environment (for example, elite bargains/capture, and corruption) also impacts sector performance.

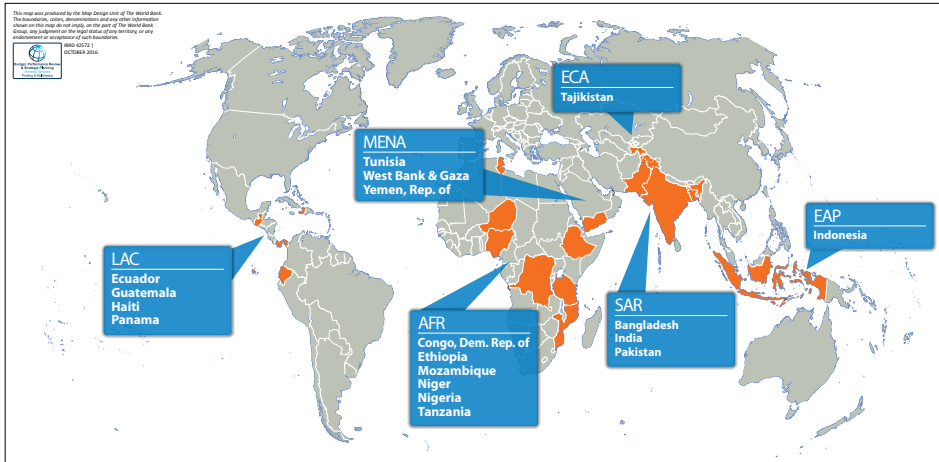
For these reasons, the WASH Poverty Diagnostic is aiming to weave together perspectives on service delivery from sector specialists with those of governance specialists who bring an understanding of public sector management and broader governance issues. By combining this thinking, the initiative aims to deepen our understanding of the impediments to service delivery and think through solutions that are both technically and politically feasible.



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Where Is it Being Implemented?

Map 1 shows where the initiative is being implemented in 18 countries across six regions.



When Will Results Be Available?

Coordination across Global Practices and mobilization defined the first phase of the initiative, which has been followed by methods development and implementation over this last year. Results from each of the 18 countries are expected to be released for public consumption by June 30, 2017 or earlier.



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