



Pushing for water supply to the very rural communities

By Isaiah Esipisu

Dr Kerstin Danert is a rural water supply specialist focusing on developing in-country capacity with respect to operation and maintenance, cost-effective borehole drilling, technology adoption and sector performance monitoring, and she, and heads the secretariat of the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN).

In an exclusive interview, she discusses the achievements attained so far, the lessons learned, and the bottlenecks towards availing water to the rural poor, as the 7th RWSN conference goes down in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Here are the excerpts:

What is this conference all about?

The forum is a chance to have people from different sectors including local and national governments, nongovernmental organisations, the private sector and community representatives to meet face to face, to exchange knowledge and share experiences.

The forum in particular is very important, because it is looking ahead towards sustainable development goals, and of course for water. The idea is to have water for all by 2030. And given the fact that 80% of people without water live in rural areas, we cannot meet this goal without giving attention to the rural people. So the conference is focusing on how we can get water to everyone. Yet no single organisation can do that alone, whether it is a bank, a govern-

ment, or even a UN organ. It is not possible. So the whole philosophy of developing this conference is to have everybody to work together.

What have been the major challenges to the campaign for water for all?

There has been progress, because there are more people with access to safe drinking water than before. But the main challenge has been reaching out to people living in very remote areas, the very poor people, how to make the marginalised communities with very little means have access to safe drinking water.

Again, there has been a lot of focus on the Millennium Development Goals especially in the past five years to get the services running. But the challenge is maintaining the systems. For example, we can get pipes running, but maintaining these services for years is a big challenge.

And if you look at the contributions coming in through this conference compared to before, there is much enthusiasm on management and sustainability. So people and organisations are thinking more on how to have the systems to continue to work, and this is a positive change.

We need to focus more on professionalism, because if the systems aren't built well, there is no way they can be maintained.

Another problem is that documentation of what is being done is very weak. That is one of the reasons we are having this



forum, to encourage organisations to document what they are doing. We need countries to understand what is being invested, what technologies are working and where.

What lessons have we learned so far?

One of the lessons learned is that we cannot do things in a hurry. You need planning to get things done well. Just running before you can walk is a problem. We need sufficient skills in place to construct and manage. Without that, we cannot achieve sustainable water supply services.

In terms of technology, we are also seeing a bigger variety of water harvesting techniques, we have seen alternative technologies also growing, where people are investing and improving their own services. However, this is only possible to those who can afford.

It's also important to note that one of the big issues is that since 1990s, there has been very little progress in rural water supplies in Africa. I do not know why, but this is an issue that should be addressed urgently.

Another key lesson is that we cannot think about water supplies, without thinking of water resources. They are totally connected. We need to understand

the water resource, we need to measure it whether it is ground water, runoff water or water from anywhere.

What next after the conference?

As a network, we are just but a facilitator. You can't tell people exactly what to do. You can help them find solutions. Each country and each organization has to adapt to the local context that is acceptable to the local people.

All documentations coming out of this conference will be available online. We also want to see if some of the contributions can be simplified and put together for the better understanding of a masses.

We also want to learn from everybody, and learn from the media representatives on how we can take some of these messages out to the communities.

What I hope to see is people working together. This forum should be a catalyst for engagement.

Who are present in this forum?

We have directors from governments, we have NGOs, we have civil society representatives, we have the private sector, we have the media and we have representatives from communities. What we have done is to bring together major global players in rural water supplies together, to discuss, to challenge each other and to come up with solutions.

All we want is to have people participate as equals so that they can challenge each other without the hierarchy. If we want to reach the solution for water for all, then we cannot afford to cheat each other.



Water for All in rural communities

From November 29 to December 2nd, 2016, Abidjan the capital city of Côte d'Ivoire is hosting the 7th international Forum on rural water supply. This is an excellent opportunity for sector experts and stakeholders to promote a world where all rural communities have access to reliable and sustainable water. Daniel Kablan Dankan, the host country PM gave the official 'go ahead' of the forum expected to find solutions for communities still without access to water.

The big and challenging question for discussions by the 600+ participants from different countries is "how to help these 663 million people - 80% of whom live in rural have access to safe and quality water"? Note that the previous

RWSN Forum was held 5 years ago in Uganda.

As clearly stated by the Dr Kerstin Danert, Director of RWSN secretariat, the Forum aims for «greater effectiveness of supply services to provide safe, quality and quantity and affordable water within a reasonable distance from homes». She added that this Forum created since 1982 currently counts 9000 members worldwide. She went on and said «we are here because we want to see everyone have access to safe water and make human rights to water and sanitation a reality». In the words of the donor lead of the water sector in Cote d'Ivoire i.e., UNICEF resident representative Mr. Aboubakar Kampo, the forum theme «Water for All» aligns with the SDG 6 on universal access to

water. She particularly said «to achieve this objective, there is need to do things differently». This was buttressed by Ethiopian water minister who commended the Forum as a golden experience sharing opportunity on rural water.

Promote innovative and appropriate approaches and technologies for rural

In his opening statement, the PM has welcomed the choice of his country to host this important Forum. Indeed, Cote d'Ivoire is the first French speaking country in Africa to host this event dedicated on rural water supply issues. He therefore said that expectations are many and include the fact that the forum should contribute to "promotion of innovative approaches, shar-

ing and learning around low cost and affordable technologies to rural households". The long term expectation for the forum is to help Côte d'Ivoire address access to water by rural people. Even though 82 % Ivoirians have access to safe water, 49.2% living in rural areas do not despite efforts made including, an investment of 200 billion XOF for urban water supply and emergency rehabilitation programme of 17.000 water points in rural.

Day 1 has focused on the following but not limited themes: economic models for sustainable water supply, scaling up services and technologies, hand dug wells, M&E of local services.

Alain TOSSOUNON (Bénin)

WaterCredit model brings water to rural communities in East Africa and beyond

By Isaiah Esipisu

Credit access at affordable rates has availed water supply and sanitation services to hundreds of thousands of households in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, the ongoing discourse on rural water supply, taking place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire has been told.

In his presentation during a parallel session to discuss what the rural people want in regard to water supply and sanitation at the 7th Rural Water Supply Network Forum, Patrick Aluppe, the East African Director for Water.org told delegates that his organisation has used USD 3.6 Million sponsored by the MasterCard Foundation, to catalyse over \$20 million in private capital deployment to-

wards water and sanitation. This was done through provision of smart subsidy to financial service providers, to the benefit of over 400,000 households in the region.

“With the right physical product and financial product availability, a lot of gaps in access to water and sanitation can easily be addressed by private capital,” said Aluppe, also a water engineer.

However, he noted that the only way to succeed in such a business, it requires financial institutions that can do it at a reasonable scale simply because if it is done at smaller scale, it is usually never viable.

“There will never be enough charity in the world to solve

the global water and sanitation crisis,” said Aluppe, adding that the sector needs fresh thinking and bold approaches to accelerate progress.

“We need market-based approaches that challenge the traditional aid system and help us achieve universal access to safe water and sanitation within our lifetime,” he told the forum, which brings together over 500 participants from governments, nongovernmental organisation, the private sector, the civil society and community representatives.

However, some of the limitations of the water credit model is that it can only work for people who can borrow and repay loans at market rates, and also works only for clients who can

be reached by financial institutions.

It therefore means that WaterCredit model may not work with the clients who are considered high risk, or who are too far away from the bank branches. “This is where new innovations will be needed. Water.org is currently exploring the use of digital technology and targeted subsidies to extend access to segments considered high risk by the financial institutions,” said Aluppe.

So far, 748 million people or 10 % of global population remains without access to water and sanitation services even after Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

And yet, finance is still a big problem. On average, investment over the period 2015 to 2030 to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of universal access to basic water and adequate sanitation is estimated at \$ 49 billion, whereas current average annual overseas development assistance to the water and sanitation sector stands at approximately \$12.7 billion, which is far short of what is needed to solve this crisis.

Today, there is a \$12 billion demand globally among families at the base of the economic pyramid for access to finance to meet their water supply and sanitation needs.

However, noted Aluppe, waterCredit remains highly relevant in the context of developing countries where access to Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) services is still low.

Governments can therefore benefit from such a microfinance model by actively encouraging financial service providers with an enabling environment in promoting WSS loans and encouraging the public-private partnerships in respective countries.



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Traduction / Translation: Naba Kambou

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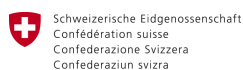
Imprimerie / Printing house: Digiprint

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