

research on



ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION IN THE PERI-URBAN INTERFACE OF METROPOLITAN REGIONS

Formal and informal practices

A three-year DFID-funded research project has been examining ways to improve urban governance and management of water and sanitation services (WSS) for the benefit of the poor in the peri-urban interface of metropolitan regions (see DPU News 45). Between February and April 2004, Adriana Allen, Julio Davila and Pascale Hofmann undertook a number of 10 day visits to the five case studies covered by this comparative project, namely Chennai (India), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo-Giza (Egypt), Mexico City and Caracas (Venezuela).

In most cases this included focus group discussions with peri-urban communities, interviews and detailed site visits. Although each case study has particular characteristics, in overall terms it was found that current formal strategies to improve access to WSS tend to neglect the reality of peri-urban communities and the informal practices of peri-urban women and men to cope with service deficiencies.

Lack of water supply is perceived by most stakeholders as a more serious problem than sanitation. Partly as a result of lower densities when compared to more central

areas, the need for sanitation facilities is seen as less urgent. However, these perceptions tend to neglect key dimensions such as future rapid densification processes, immediate health risks and contamination of aquifers and rivers. Even institutionally, water supply and sanitation tend to be treated differently, giving precedence to water supply, partly because water is more easily subject to commodification

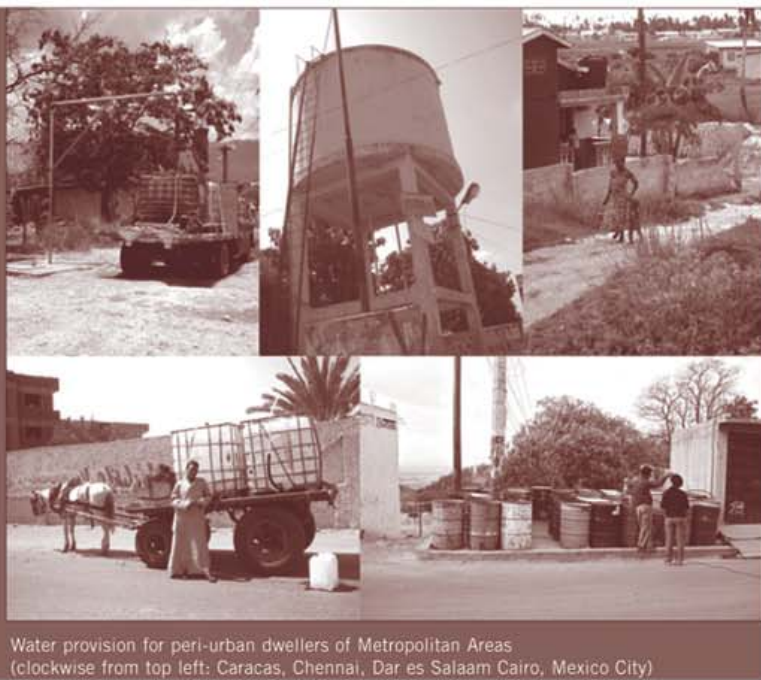
The participatory exercises, involving a number of stakeholders in each locality, highlighted important environmental, managerial, accessibility and accountability challenges.

While the case studies reveal a wide spectrum of flexible arrangements in the provision of WSS - including a growing involvement of both the private and community sectors - all too often coping strategies by peri-urban dwellers do not find the necessary support from the formal system. In Mexico the importance of rainwater harvesting, reuse and recycling was highlighted by members of the community but these practices at present lack technical and financial support to offer a viable alternative. In the cases of Dar es Salaam and Cairo, current strategies to improve access (including privatisation of the formal system) overlook the reality of peri-urban residents and small firms, while informal private vendors are largely ignored; this has implications not merely for a reliable and affordable access to these services but also for the livelihoods of a substantial number of people. The table on the right provides an overview of the different formal and informal practices through which peri-urban dwellers (including the poor) gain access to water.

As for access to sanitation facilities, the spectrum of practices is less diverse. Most peri-urban dwellers use septic tanks and pit latrines (private or public), very few being connected to an underground sewerage network. Some even lack the most basic facilities, resulting in the practice of open defecation.

The workshops further revealed a frequent lack of cooperation and communication between agents operating at different levels. For instance, in Cairo-Giza, the national government department responsible for WSS legislation and construction of WSS facilities does not involve the local authorities, who are accountable for the operation and maintenance of these facilities, in the decision making, leading to conflicts between the different government levels.

Plans to privatise water supply and sanitation are underway in several of the case studies. Rarely do these plans include specific strate-



Water provision for peri-urban dwellers of Metropolitan Areas (clockwise from top left: Caracas, Chennai, Dar es Salaam, Cairo, Mexico City)

The main objectives of these visits were:

1. To become familiarised with the specific peri-urban localities selected for each case study.
2. To prepare and facilitate with the local team a multi-stakeholder workshop to assess barriers and opportunities of the current institutional framework to improve peri-urban practices in WSS.
3. To discuss and plan the next steps of the project.

Before the visits each local team completed an overview of the WSS system in their particular metropolitan area and conducted fieldwork in two sample peri-urban localities.

and partly because in some cases the two services are dealt with by separate agencies. The above observations were further confirmed during the workshops. When participants were asked to identify problems and opportunities in the WSS system on the basis of the different stages of the water cycle (see diagram), they seldom paid



attention to the issues of disposal and treatment and concentrated instead on the other steps in the water cycle.

Provider	Formal practices	Informal practices
Public (state) sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piped network (HH connections and public standpipes) • Wells and bore-wells (not Mexico) • Provision by tankers • Water kiosks (Dar es Salaam) • Negotiation with communities through 'technical water boards' (Caracas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public provision distorted by bribery practices
Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying from licensed tankers (not in Cairo) • Buying packaged water (cans, bottles, sachets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying from tankers • Private vendors drawing from own site piped connections/own boreholes or wells sold directly by bucket or through push carts and bicycle vendors (Dar es Salaam)
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own individual wells and bore-wells (not Mexico or Caracas) • Piped network (community organisation agreement with local authority (Mexico) or public water company (Caracas)) • Piped network kiosks and taps run by the community with NGO support (Dar es Salaam) • Boreholes and kiosks run by the community (Dar es Salaam) • Water condominiums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainwater harvesting (not Caracas) • Water theft • Gifts or paid provision from neighbours • Clandestine connections

and some of the papers produced so far are available on the PUI programme website. To download and for more information about the project in general visit



Participatory workshop in Chennai

Pascale Hofmann

www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui, or contact Pascale Hofmann. p.hofmann@ucl.ac.uk

gies to improve the access to these services by peri-urban dwellers or to support existing practices. An exception was found in Dar es Salaam, where a Community Water Supply and Sanitation Programme is incorporated in the privatisation process. However the resource capacities allocated to this programme are fairly limited to meet the reality of the peri-urban poor. Overall, it became clear that current strategies to improve access to water and sanitation overlook the specific reality of peri-urban women and men. For most households, informal practices remain the only option to access water, whilst sanitation issues are even further away from being addressed. However, in Caracas, the study has closely documented a growing number of participatory arrangements such as technical water boards and community water councils, as well as a new local institutional structure which, through the community councils and local planning councils, enables peri-urban dwellers (including the poor) to engage in participatory democracy whilst improving their access to these basic services. Although the project is only concluding its first phase, there are already indications that

will make a tangible impact on the WSS decision making process. In Chennai, where water scarcity is a serious problem for all citizens, there is a good chance that the guidelines developed within this project will be incorporated in the formulation of a new WSS regulatory framework at the metropolitan level. Similarly, in the case of Cairo-Giza, the project provided a platform to raise awareness among senior officers about the need to pay specific attention to the reality of peri-urban dwellers and the poor in general when bringing private contractors on board. During the visit to Mexico the possibility came up to connect the project to the Fourth World Water Forum, which will take place in Mexico in 2006. As a result, access to water in peri-urban areas has been included as one of the key sub-themes of the forum. Over the next few months the project team in London, in collaboration with the overseas project partners, will draft and test a set of guidelines to improve WSS in the PUI of metropolitan areas before discussing them with a wider audience in a round of regional workshops in the Middle East and East Africa, Asia and Latin America next Spring. Most of the reports from the project partners