



Photo Credit: Duncan McNicholl

Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership

# Understanding the Network that Sustains Rural Water Services in Uganda's Kabarole District

September 2018

## Introduction

This research brief presents findings from a network analysis of stakeholder relationships affecting rural water service sustainability in Kabarole District, Uganda. Aguaconsult and IRC carried out this study with the Kabarole District local government and rural water service stakeholders as part of the USAID-funded Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership (SWS). With support from IRC, the district water and sanitation coordination committee in Kabarole has been working to develop and implement models and tools for improving rural

water services. IRC is bringing stakeholders together in a Learning Alliance – a platform for stakeholders involved in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service delivery and engaged in testing and learning about methods for improving and sustaining it. This study was undertaken to support the Learning Alliance's efforts to develop strategies for improving rural water services by providing insights into the system of actors and factors that influence the sustainability of services.



## Methodology

The network mapping study was conducted in September 2017, using data collected through qualitative interviews. A total of 49 actors at the regional, district, sub-county, and parish levels, who contribute in one form or another to rural water service delivery, were interviewed to capture data on their network interactions and identify perceived factors affecting rural water service sustainability. Each interview included a facilitated exercise whereby the participant would draw the network of the stakeholder who they represented. The networks drawn during the interviews were then aggregated to create whole networks which demonstrated properties such as the nature of connections between actors and the most central actors to the network.

In addition to identifying the nature of the connections between actors, the study captured the frequency of their interactions at the following intervals: yearly, quarterly, monthly, and weekly. This information can be used to identify specific stakeholder groups who are more consistently engaged than others.

## Key Findings

With the findings from the network analysis, the Learning Alliance can identify actors who have ties to different parts of the network and make recommendations on how these actors can be engaged to improve coordination and alignment around the vision for WASH services in Kabarole District.

**District Councillors are the most central actors in the network.** “Centrality” is measured by the likelihood that a stakeholder is on the shortest path between any two stakeholders in a network – indicating that they serve as a link or broker between other stakeholders. District Councillors emerge as central stakeholders because of their connections at both the district and local levels. As the stakeholders most central to the network, Councillors can provide a “bridge” between communities and other district level actors. District government offices also occupy central roles in the network studied.

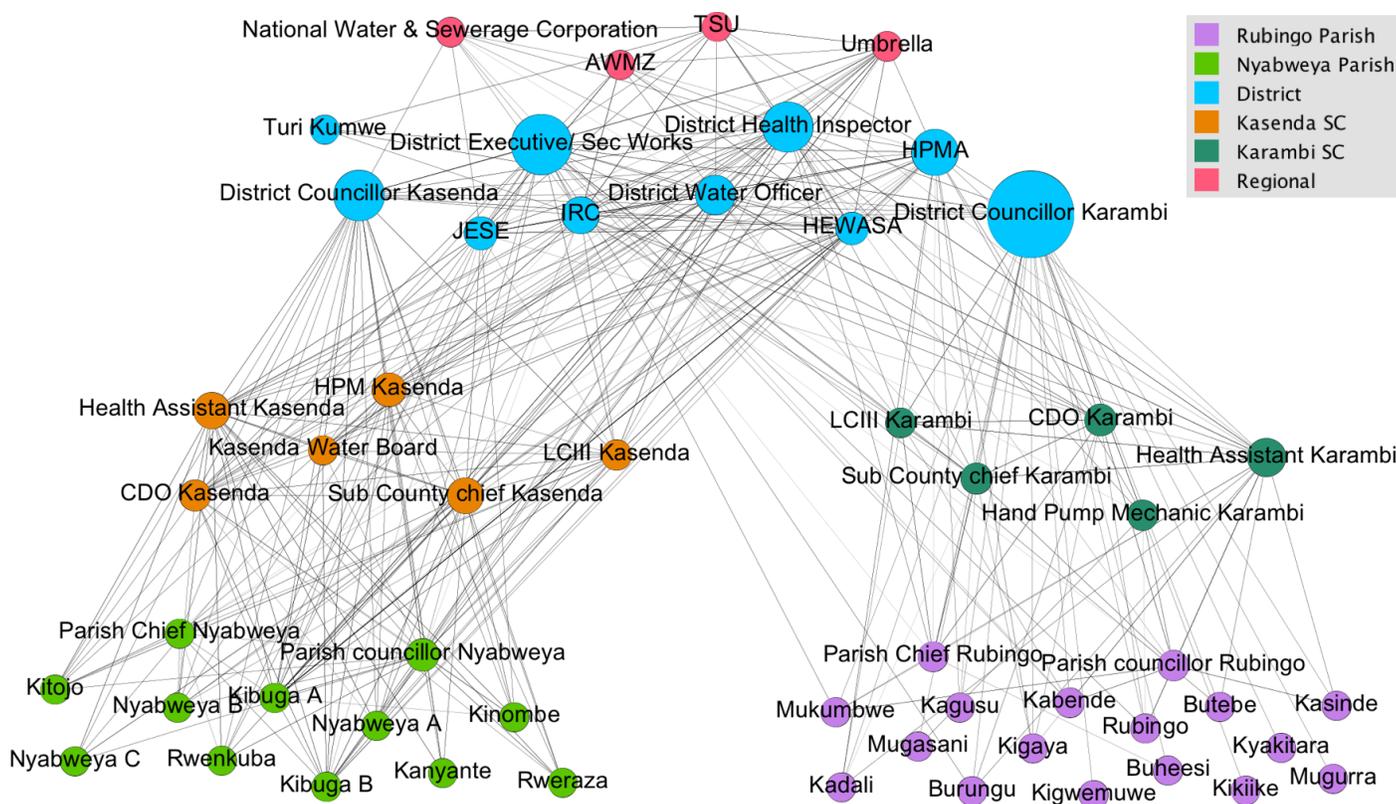


Figure 1. All network nodes and ties; node sizes are proportional to how central a stakeholder is. District Councillors emerged as the most central nodes in the overall network on a yearly basis.

### Communities are the most disconnected actors.

Despite the presence of relationships between communities and other actors at regional, district, and sub-county levels, communities are not included in network interactions on a frequent basis. Many communities are isolated from regular, frequent (weekly or monthly) discussions about services. For example, 6 of the 25 communities surveyed only interact with other stakeholders on a yearly basis, and 13 of the 25 only interact with other stakeholders monthly.

### Lessons Learned

In light of the findings, the report offers some lessons to consider when designing intervention strategies for improving WASH services.

- Engage political leaders and other key actors to better and more efficiently connect all network actors.** The analysis found District Councilors play central roles in the network because of their ties to both district and local constituents. The Learning Alliance can leverage these findings to engage key stakeholders, such as District Councilors, to improve coordination and alignment around rural water service sustainability in Kabarole District. For example, District Councilors are responsible for endorsing annual budgets for local governments. Together with their strategic position in connecting various actors, this makes them key allies in influencing and securing commitment towards allocation of adequate financial resources for rural water services.
- Consistently engage communities to fully participate in collaborative efforts to improve the sustainability of WASH services.** Services are delivered at the community level. Without closer links to the sub-county or district level governments, communities are unlikely to be able to access the resources and support needed for operating and

maintaining services. Without such ties, it is likely communities will struggle to effectively play their role. The broader network would benefit from stronger relationships with communities to ensure they understand and are able to play a role in sustaining rural water services, particularly with regard to financial contributions for operation and maintenance.



IRC's Peter Magara (right) conducts an interview for a study on the factors affecting WASH system sustainability in Uganda's Kabarole District. Photo Credit: Duncan McNicholl

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**About the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership:** SWS is working to identify and test locally-driven solutions to the challenge of developing robust local systems capable of sustaining WASH service delivery. This brief is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement AID/OAA-A-16-00075. The contents are the responsibility of the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. For more information, visit [www.globalwaters.org/SWS](http://www.globalwaters.org/SWS), or contact Elizabeth Jordan ([EJordan@usaid.gov](mailto:EJordan@usaid.gov)) or Dan Hollander ([Daniel.Hollander@colorado.edu](mailto:Daniel.Hollander@colorado.edu)).