

Towards a concerted approach for Hygiene and Sanitation promotion in Somaliland

Volker Hüls

Global interactions increasingly rely on law to govern them. Today, numerous rules dominate the interactions between states and non-state parties. International courts and dispute settlement mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance with commonly agreed norms.

International Law, however, is complex and often lacks universal acceptance. Worse, its influence is disproportionately strong on the poorest countries and countries in crisis. It is in situations of poverty and conflict where international law has the most impact - for better or worse. International legal structures can provide security, stability and access to economic support, but they can just as easily prevent timely and adequate assistance. Development and humanitarian actors must increasingly be aware of their potential as well as their pitfalls.

Good Governance is easily prescribed, but must become a mindset of all involved to make the system work. Less and least developed countries are often governed by constitutions that are complex and inaccessible for their citizens. Without acceptance by their subjects, they weaken and cease to safeguard the nation state against failure. Development assistance must provide more than just models and institutions to move these countries forward.

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For queries write to:

The Editor
lawanddevelopment.org
P.O.Box 1106
Nairobi 00502
Kenya

info@lawanddevelopment.org

www.lawanddevelopment.org

Towards a concerted approach for Hygiene and Sanitation promotion in Somaliland

Phase I – Analysis

Volker Hüls

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on an analysis of the structure, coordination and practice of hygiene and sanitation promotion in Somaliland. It is the result of consulting a wide variety of actors in this sector and attempts to reflect the current thinking of everybody involved in improving the sanitary conditions of the Somaliland people. While the analysis originally focused on training in the hygiene and sanitation sector, in its course it turned out to be indicative of how the Somaliland government and the development partners in the country interact, and, due to the relevance of local government structures for the sector, a paradigm for decentralisation of the state and local governance.

Educating the Somaliland population, in particular the rural population, in matters of hygiene and sanitation proves to be a major challenge for improving their living conditions. Numerous approaches have been and are being used, ranging from simple public campaigns conveying general messages to long-term participatory training in individual villages or towns. In rural areas, where access to information is poorest, the latter has shown to be the most promising and sustainable approach. Less intensive methods make sense in predominantly urban public awareness campaigns, but continue to be used as the only form of education in many rural interventions. This happens for a variety of reasons like mandates, funding or security restrictions. However, some organisations have demonstrated that long-term participatory methodologies are feasible and practical in Somaliland. The sector is therefore characterised by a wide variety of methodologies and a common approach remains to be established.

To facilitate this, Caritas Switzerland and Caritas Luxembourg, in a consortium as ‘Swiss Group’ and funded by the European Union, have adapted the existing PHAST¹ methodology for the Somaliland context. Based on PHAST they have also developed the CHAST² approach for educating children in hygiene and sanitation, and have productively applied both in their projects. The Swiss Group experience continues to be shared with other development partners through training courses and workshops. However, these efforts until today have not been sufficient to achieve common standards. Two main reasons for this are identified in this paper. Firstly, the international development partners do not interact sufficiently amongst themselves or with all practically relevant levels of the Somaliland government. Secondly, the government not only lacks capacity but also the legal instruments to ensure a common approach. Both shortcomings are not new, nor are they particularly surprising. They continue, however, to impede sustainable development in all sectors, not only in hygiene and sanitation. The interaction of development actors with each other and their host government is at a status quo that is not as productive as it could be.

More than coordination is needed if a common approach should be achieved. Somaliland is a functioning state, notwithstanding its international status, and its government and not the international community should steer the development of the country. As opposed to mere coordination this has significant merit. Firstly, a proactive government can use its local knowledge about what the people of the country need to direct organisations to areas that are most in need. Secondly, a knowledgeable government can advise the development actors on which approaches are most suitable. Everybody consulted in this study supports the notion of a more rules-based nationwide approach to hygiene and sanitation promotion and hygiene and sanitation in general. It is felt that if the government set clear standards for training methodology and contents (and beyond this for the whole sector) a common approach would develop even without the need for enforcement. Similarly, a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government would improve the application of such common standards.

¹ Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation

² Children’s Hygiene and Sanitation Training

A strategic common approach to hygiene and sanitation training and hygiene and sanitation in general could be achieved at different levels of stringency. A 'Best Practices' paper could certainly be a good basis, and national standards for all aspects of hygiene and sanitation, including training, could build on such a basic document. A national hygiene and sanitation policy would be the most stringent document.

Such Policy appears to be the most suitable instrument to tackle the structural problems in the sector, and it would be able to build on and expand the successful establishment of policies in the water and the health sector. Beyond hygiene and sanitation this will further strengthen a government that still lacks capacity and has the potential to empower local government.

It is doubtful that the 'lesser' documents that have been suggested will achieve a concerted approach for hygiene and sanitation (promotion) as well as a policy can. It is therefore recommended to pursue the formulation of policy to further structure in the hygiene and sanitation sector in Somaliland.

2. PHAST/CHAST AND ITS ROLE IN SOMALILAND

2.1. THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN COMMUNITY TRAINING

Participatory approaches to training are an established instrument of development assistance. The advantages are evident. The feeling of process ownership that is created by participation boosts sustainability of the training results. The underlying philosophy of the PHAST³ approach is SARAR⁴, and PHAST explores its main ideas of involvement in decision making, local knowledge appreciation and enjoyable group learning to change hygiene and sanitation behaviour.

Participation requires time and commitment, as it builds on mutual respect between the trainer and the trainee. The success of participation consequently depends on the wider environment of the community training. Access to the community, capacity of the development partner, and the duration of available funding are core factors. Numerous programmes that are participatory by name fall short of these requirements and end up simply being teaching, creating knowledge with a limited life span, but certainly no stable behavioural change.

This fine balance between mere teaching and participatory training is evident in the approaches to Hygiene and Sanitation promotion and the PHAST method. PHAST has created a wide range of visual training materials that are, however, of limited impact if the underlying philosophy is not fully supported and the effort of full participation is not made. The use of the visual aids by themselves may be productive in public awareness campaigns that build on previous participatory training; by itself it is clearly insufficient. This variety of deviation from an essentially participatory method is evident in the Somaliland context and arguably is a main obstacle to sustainable behaviour change.

2.2. THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO HYGIENE AND SANITATION TRAINING IN SOMALILAND

The PHAST approach in Somaliland has been driven by Caritas Switzerland / Luxembourg (Swiss Group) with the financial assistance of the European Union. A number of international NGOs and UN agencies have participated in trainings, and some now implement a thoroughly participatory community hygiene and sanitation training component in their projects. PHAST has not, however, even come near universal application; organisations still “train and leave”. Various reasons are given by the partners consulted. Security considerations in some regions of Somaliland have made a long-term presence difficult, preventing full engagement with communities. Similarly, an organisation’s policy or the structure of funding they receive may let them work with a large number of communities, restricting the capacity to engage for a sufficient period in each. Also, some organisation’s mandate, either internal or as given by the donor, may even prevent them from following a long-term participatory approach, especially when they implement ‘emergency’ or resettlement interventions. From their perspective PHAST is seen as too ambitious and beyond their implementing capacity. However, productive engagement is possible as shown by the successes of organisations committed to full participation. One organisation that has achieved behavioural change through long-term presence in the target communities stated clearly that PHAST is feasible in the Somaliland context. That this organisation has been exposed to a highly variable security situation and the same funding restriction as others gives this experience additional weight. While they admit that it is tedious at times, they strongly believe in their approach and seem to be proved right by the results they achieve.

³ Simpson-Hebert, M., R. Sawyer, et al., Eds. (1996). Participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation: A new approach to working with communities. Geneva, WHO.; Simpson-Hebert, M., R. Sawyer, et al., Eds. (1998). PHAST Step-by-step Guide: A participatory approach for the control of diarrheal disease. Geneva, WHO.

⁴ Self-esteem, associative strengths, resourcefulness, Action-planning and Responsibility, a participatory methodology developed since the 1970s

The picture emerges that organisations are hindered as much by their own internal structures and policies as by external factors. The lack of agreement on a common standard in hygiene and sanitation training, amongst development partners but also between them and the government, continues to allow a variety of individual approaches to be used that fall short of the participatory aim of PHAST. As an official of the Ministry of Health expressed it, organisations work “here and there” in a “disorganised” way. The picture is less gloomy for the education of children in hygiene and sanitation through schools. Elements of PHAST have for this purpose been developed further and led to the CHAST⁵ methodology. By its introduction into curricula and the training of teachers, a longer-term engagement with the target group is quite naturally achieved. However, the general observations made in the context of adult hygiene and sanitation education still apply, as clearly the commitment of schools and teaching personnel also depends on sustained support by development partners and the government. In a national context therefore behavioural change in hygiene and sanitation is slow and varied. The variety of methodologies prevents any synergistic effects between communities, which would give such transformation additional impetus.

The obstacles to a concerted approach can be grouped into three categories. On the outside, the coordination between the development actors (i.e. donors and implementing partners) is a main factor. From inside, a gap in government structure, especially a gap between central and local government seems to be the key problem. And in between, limited interaction between the development community and the government prevents common practice. Figure I summarises these general obstacles; they are discussed in more detail in the following section.

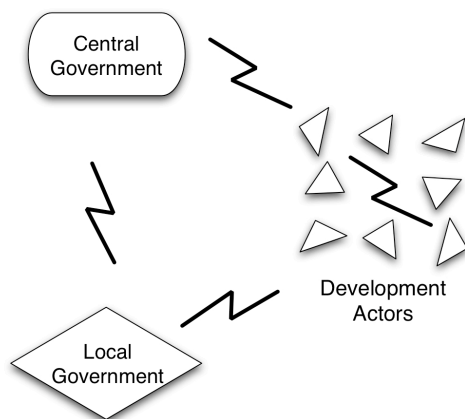


Figure I – Obstacles to a concerted approach

⁵ De Vreede, E. (2005). "Children's hygiene and sanitation training in Somalia." *Waterlines* 23(3): 12.

3. THE OBSTACLES TO A COMMON APPROACH

3.1. OUTSIDE: THE ROLE OF AID COORDINATION

In practice the role coordination can play is mostly an operational one. A coordination body is a useful entity to collect and disperse information among its members, and it can use this information to guide its members in their activities. In practice, however, coordination is always limited by the mandates of the individual organisations. Areas of operations may be restricted and organisational structures may prevent certain approaches. Coordination groups therefore work best in emergency situations, when a common goal is more imminent and the scope of activities is restricted by the situation. In long-term development work as it takes place in Somaliland more than just the general activities of organisations need to be synchronised. Here, the individual policies dominate and it cannot be expected that these can be aligned merely by regular meetings. This is exemplified by the experience of the three coordination groups relevant to hygiene and sanitation training:

SACB⁶ Committees

The coordination committees of the SACB have been mandated to achieve common sectoral approaches and improve the information exchange between development partners. The committee most relevant to Hygiene and Sanitation education (besides the Health and Education Sector Committees) is the Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure Sectoral Committee (WSISC). The committee has mostly failed to achieve the aim of establishing common approaches for several reasons. Firstly, a coordination body is only as strong as the commitment of its members. The total absence of some development partners in the WSISC meetings has always made it difficult to even get close to a common understanding on practices. Although a reasonably inclusive workshop in 2003 has confirmed the need for such synchronisation, it requires the dedication of each partner to make it a practical reality. Secondly, the majority of meetings are still held in Nairobi. This distance to Somaliland additionally excludes organisations without a presence in Nairobi and all Somaliland organisations and government authorities.

Water coordination meeting Hargeisa

The Somaliland equivalent of the WSISC is chaired by the Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources and aims to bring all actors in the wider sector together in coordination. The meeting aims to be cross-sectoral by including representatives from other sectors such as Health. The minutes are shared with the SACB. The meeting, however, suffers from similar constraints as the Nairobi SACB meeting, including regular absence of development partners. An effort was made to hold joint meetings between the Nairobi and the Hargeisa group, which also suffered from limited attendance of Nairobi representatives in the Hargeisa meetings.

Sanitation and Hygiene Working Group

The Sanitation and Hygiene Working Group was created to overcome the shortfalls of the Nairobi-based SACB process. It was to include all actors in Somaliland active in Sanitation and Hygiene, including national NGOs and government authorities. It failed to do so, again for several reasons. The group suffered from the principal shortcomings of the Nairobi committee – lack of participation and variety of mandates. In addition it temporarily became a purely international meeting group, which severely reduced its credibility with the government and national development partners. It is currently not active.

Coordination is therefore a secondary instrument in the context studied here, and requires others structures to make the underlying rules.

⁶ Somalia Aid Coordination Body

3.2. BETWEEN OUTSIDE AND INSIDE: THE COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

The government is the obvious rule-setting body in Somaliland. All individuals consulted during the study agree on one fact: The interaction between the government of Somaliland and the development partners requires improvement, and this gap is at the heart of the problem complex preventing a common approach in hygiene and sanitation training. Many organisations have given the lack of capacity in the government as a main reason for not relying on their participation in activities. However, as one international NGO pointed out, to make government work it must be accepted and respected, although that may require more effort than just bypassing it at will.

The interaction between Development Actors and Central Government in Somaliland has different facets. All organisations have in common that they require the government's consent to undertake project work in the country, whether they are Intergovernmental or Nongovernmental, international or national. After the initial permit is given by the Ministry of Planning, all further interaction is between the development actors and the relevant sectoral, the 'line' ministries. At this stage the character of the interaction is different between Intergovernmental organisations such as the UN specialised agencies, and Nongovernmental Organisations. The mandate of the UN requires working through the government, while Nongovernmental Organisations tend to only involve the government to the extent necessary, to preserve their independent status. This to a certain extent is systemic, but raises the barrier to practising common approaches. A further deterrent appears to be the limited output development partners can expect from their line ministry. Ministries are seen as collecting proposals and reports, but delivering no output that would benefit coordination, such as a timely overview of gaps and duplication of activities in the sector.

This, however, creates a vicious cycle. Because the capacity of the ministries is still low, interaction by NGOs is kept to a minimum. In turn, the ministries do not have an incentive to improve their information management and, ultimately, their capacity to manage development assistance. The UN, driven by their mandate, achieves more cooperation, and along the line actively supports the capacity of their respective line ministries.

Different from the interaction of development actors with central government, the interface to local government is not regulated at all and therefore even weaker and more varied. Where the delegated authority of the line ministries in some sectors such as water and health reaches into the regional authorities, organisations consult with the respective officers on interventions in their area of responsibility. This, however, is practically only an extension of the interaction with the ministry in Hargeisa.

Municipal and district councils are currently mostly left out of project implementation by development partners. Activities are usually directly and exclusively negotiated with the targeted communities. While community agreement is crucial, it is not sufficient. Adding to that, organisations tend to set up committees for their individual purposes and sectors, which in some villages has led to an inflation of such bodies. Depending on the strategies of the development partner the committees have different structures and aims, making synchronisation between communities an almost impossible task. By involving the relevant district authorities from the start such discrepancies could be avoided, as they would be able to link a new intervention to ongoing activities in the same and other villages. Not consulting these authorities creates a vicious cycle similar to the one at central level – the newly elected local councils, with their limited experience in governing their locality, have no opportunity to build their capacity through being included and ultimately contribute to development interventions.

3.3. INSIDE: THE CENTRAL-LOCAL GAP IN THE SOMALILAND GOVERNMENT

Somaliland actively pursues decentralisation of government, a clear mandate given by the constitution. The decentralisation has two elements. Firstly, there is devolution of powers to the municipal and district councils, which for the first time have been elected in December 2002. Secondly, there is a delegation of powers to regional councils that are still part of the central government and appointed.

	Central Government	Regional Government	Local Government
Established by	Election / Appointment	Appointment	Election
Type of Decentralization	-	Delegation	Devolution
Reports to	-	Ministry of Interior Sector Ministries	Ministry of Interior
Sector-specific Institutions	Sector Ministries	Regional Sector Offices	None
Main development responsibility	Policy and Supervision	Coordination, Conflict Resolution	Coordination, Implementation

Figure II – Levels of Somaliland Government

Local government authorities and development partners perceive a large gap between central and local government. There are a number of reasons for this gap. Most prominently, the municipal and district councils have been elected fairly recently, and while responsibilities are fully devolved, funds and power have not necessarily followed. The local administrations often have no past experience in managing their new constituencies, and there is a lack of guidance from central government. Local administrations, however, are in a uniquely qualified position to make development decisions in their realm. They are most in touch with the particular problems of their district, and have in many cases build up valuable expertise that supports organisations working in their locality – which is one of the key arguments supporting decentralisation. This expertise does not, however, shape national policy. The lessons learned from ‘pilot’ projects cannot be applied nationwide due to the prevailing gap. The ‘disconnect’ between central and local government therefore is an additional factor influencing the interaction with development partners.

3.3.1. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Central Government: Ministries

The ministries of the Somaliland government vary in their structure and degree of organisation and regional delegation. Three sectors with their respective ministries are relevant to the scope of this analysis, Health, Water and Education. Generally, there appear to be uncertainties about the specific responsibilities for cross-sectoral issues. This is surely true for hygiene and sanitation and must be addressed if the sector is to become more structured and harmonised.

The Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources and its Policy

Hygiene and Sanitation education has traditionally been a component of water projects. The Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources consequently is the central government authority that coordinates the projects in the sector at a national level.

The water sector in Somaliland has recently experienced a considerable improvement in its structure and direction by the establishment of a National Water Policy and the Water Act as well as a national strategy building on both documents. Currently, water regulations, in the form of by-laws, are being formulated to enforce the Water Act⁷.

Sufficient clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry, in relation to other ministries, local government, citizens, companies, and development partners now exists. The Ministry's responsibilities focus on the safekeeping of water resources and upholding standards for water supply installations and management structures. Crucially, the Water Act clarifies central-local relations by assigning a clear supervisory role to the ministry while the actual implementation of water development projects will be the responsibility of local government and their partners.

Sanitation and Hygiene, a downstream issue of water supply that only begins at the tap according to the policy is, according to these documents, not part of the core mandate of the Ministry. While the quality of water is under its supervision, quite logically the ministry should not have to get distracted by the mostly social aspects of maintaining this water quality level in the household or the general community.

The Ministry of Health and Labour and its Policy

The Ministry of Health and Labour is therefore the second major stakeholder in hygiene and sanitation in Somaliland. Being in charge of preventative health, it is naturally concerned with reducing the incidents of waterborne and sanitation-related diseases.

Like the Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources the Ministry of Health and Labour has established a national policy for its sector. The policy lays out the responsibilities of the Ministry and defines a decentralised structure where most of the service provision is devolved to the Regional Health Boards.

Not unlike its Water equivalent, the Health Policy does not specifically address hygiene and sanitation as a component of preventative health. Indirectly, however, through the goals of reducing child mortality and preventing the outbreak of communicable diseases the ministry is certainly getting involved in hygiene and sanitation activities.

The Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education has a very specific role in the scope of this study, being responsible for the delivery of education. While adult education through PHAST may be less of the Ministry's concern, the implementation of CHAST-based programmes in schools is. Also, general hygiene and sanitation promotion (with the exception of awareness campaigns) is clearly not a role for the ministry. The Ministry of Education is also strongly decentralised, with education offices at regional and district level.

⁷ The *National Water Policy* is a general statement of principles and guidelines; the *National Water Strategy* indicates objectives, priorities and detailed measures as well as the implementation of the policy. The *Water Act* as primary legislation establishes the legal framework to support the strategy, defining organisations, mandates and responsibilities. The (upcoming) *Water Regulations* will gather all the by-laws necessary to enforce the Water Act and will allow anybody acting against it to be taken to court.

3.3.2. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Government: Regional Authorities

Each region of Somaliland has a Regional Council that decides on matters of concern to the region by “transmit[ting] to the region and its districts the policies of the central government.”⁸ The regional leaders are appointed by the central government as stipulated in the constitution, their offices are therefore essentially an extension of the central government. Attached to the regional authorities are then the sector-specific positions, in this case the Regional Water Offices, the Regional Medical Officers and the Regional Health Board, and the Regional and District Education Offices. Regional authorities are in charge of the wider issues in the region such as security and the mediation of conflict between districts and communities.

3.3.3. The Roles and Responsibilities of Local Government: District / Municipal Authorities

District and Municipal Authorities are truly de-concentrated government structure. Their election for the first time in December 2002 changed the character of government in Somaliland considerably. Having previously been an extension of the central government through appointment, they are now independent governing bodies that implement national policy according to local requirements. On administrative matters they report to the Ministry of the Interior, but are otherwise not under the control of central authorities. District councils are in charge of the rural settlements in their area and therefore have a crucial role in rural development activities. However, decentralisation does not in itself create empowered local government. While decision making and adapting national policy is easily devolved, administrative and operational capacity is not and needs time to grow. This lack of capacity is exacerbated by low revenue, but first and foremost by poor guidance and lack of policy from the central level. The effect in Somaliland is obvious: Local knowledge does not shape central policy, common approaches in key development sectors have not been established, and generally local authorities are sidelined by development actors.

⁸ Somaliland “Regions and Districts Law” (Law 23/2002)

4. THE WAY TOWARDS A CONCERTED APPROACH TO HYGIENE AND SANITATION PROMOTION

The previous sections have outlined the gaps in the approach to hygiene and sanitation promotion in Somaliland and in the process have pointed towards a larger structural problem as the underlying cause. This manifests itself in various ways, and the analysis touched on issues of organisational policy, the interaction between development partners and the Somaliland government and, crucially, government capacity. The picture emerged that the present coordination mechanisms are inadequate to improve the present situation.

4.1. MORE THAN COORDINATION IS NEEDED

More than coordination is therefore needed if a common approach should be achieved. Somaliland is a functioning state, notwithstanding its international status, and its government and not the international community should steer the development of the country. As opposed to mere coordination this has significant merit. Firstly, a proactive government can use its local knowledge about what the people of the country need to direct organisations to areas that are most in need. Secondly, a knowledgeable government can advise the development actors on which approaches are most suitable. This is aptly demonstrated by the sector analysed here. In hygiene and sanitation, messages and training methodology must be suitable for the Somali cultural context – the very reason for the thorough adaptation of PHAST and the development of CHAST for this particular environment.

Everybody consulted in this study supports the notion of a more rules-based nationwide approach to hygiene and sanitation promotion. It is felt that if the government set clear standards for training methodology and contents a common approach would develop even without the need for enforcement. Similarly, a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government would improve the application of such common standards.

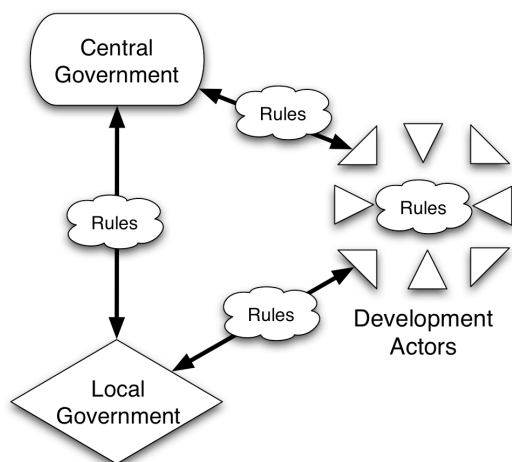


Figure III – The benefit of a rules-based approach

This necessarily takes the matter to a higher level. While it makes sense to set specific standards for hygiene and sanitation promotion it also makes sense to put them into a wider structuring of the hygiene and sanitation sector. The lack of adequate sanitation that still prevails in Somaliland is arguably exacerbated by shortcomings at a national, a policy level. This is in line with current opinion and mirrors the gaps in other developing countries. "Without a sound national policy there is no focus for the planning of sanitation programmes"⁹. Conversely, as was stated by a development partner in Somaliland, the missing link between the government and what is done on the ground prevents the achievements of localised pilot projects to improve implementation nationwide. Again, this reflects the experience in numerous other countries¹⁰.

A strategic common approach to hygiene and sanitation training and hygiene and sanitation in general could be achieved at different levels of stringency. A 'Best Practices' paper could certainly be a good basis, and national standards for all aspects of hygiene and sanitation, including training, could build on such a basic document. A national hygiene and sanitation policy would be the most stringent document. The merits and shortcomings of each option are discussed here briefly, followed by considerations on their implementation in the Somaliland context.

4.2. COMMONLY AGREED BEST PRACTICES

A 'Best Practices' Paper could certainly instigate a concerted approach in hygiene and sanitation promotion. It has been expressed by development partners that a major problem is the lack of sharing of information and materials between them, and that a 'standard manual' for hygiene and sanitation training could prevent each organisation implementing their own variety of training. A general manual for hygiene and sanitation practices reportedly is under development by the Ministry of Health and Labour in Somaliland and could be complemented by a section on training. Such a 'Best Practices' document is certainly the most easy to establish, as the manuals exist in the shape of the PHAST and CHAST materials. However, the very fact that despite coordination efforts and the availability of these materials for a number of years has not improved standardisation indicates that more than just 'Best Practices' may be needed.

4.3. NATIONAL STANDARDS

National Standards would go further than 'Best Practices'. Although generally being an instrument of comparable format, their adoption by the government as a 'national rule' would carry more weight¹¹. Applicable standards are lacking in many sectors, and the adoption of PHAST/CHAST as the standard approach for all hygiene and sanitation education in Somaliland would contribute to improving the structure of government. As they are specifically addressing one issue, in this case Hygiene and Sanitation promotion, they are fairly easy to establish. Mere standards however, limited in their remit, will have to be assigned to a clear authority. With the current lack of clarity which ministry should be in charge of Hygiene and Sanitation this may cause unnecessary confusion. Standards may therefore not be a very efficient way of harmonising activities in the current situation.

⁹ Elledge, M. F. and R. Schertenleib (2003). "Sanitation Policies." [IRC Thematic Overview Paper](#).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ They could be given standing through secondary legislation (such as by-laws) to allow enforcement by local authority

4.4. NATIONAL SANITATION POLICY

A national sanitation policy would go further than just setting standards. It would embed standards into an enabling framework, outlining the roles of the involved government authorities and therefore dealing with the question of who should be in charge. Sector-specific policies (in Health and Water) have been successfully established and appear to be fully adopted by all stakeholders. Hygiene and Sanitation, of which training is an important part, is a highly complex and cross-sectoral issue; a national policy would create a sure basis for developing the multi-layered organisational structure (between the different sectors, levels of government and development partners) that is needed to translate policy into action on the ground.¹² A good sanitation policy helps to create an enabling environment, that encourages development assistance, and it is critical for the replication and scaling up of successful pilot programmes. A sound sanitation policy, by clearly defining roles, could therefore also help to close the gap that exists between local and central government in Somaliland. A national sanitation policy has been suggested by the majority of the individuals contacted during this study; a recent workshop held in Boroma has come to a similar conclusion.¹³

A national policy, however, is a complex instrument to establish, especially with the cross-sectoral character of hygiene and sanitation. To be comprehensive, it would have to define standards for a range of subjects, including the construction of sanitation facilities, the treatment of waste, and - the subject of this study - hygiene and sanitation promotion. Despite the dimension of the task, African countries are increasingly establishing national sanitation policies. In Somaliland at its present stage it is certainly worthwhile considering formulating such policy.

4.5. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMMON APPROACH

Notwithstanding the nature of the instrument chosen, it will have to be effectively implemented to achieve the desired outcome – a concerted approach for hygiene and sanitation (promotion) in Somaliland. From the discussions with the different stakeholders it is clear that local government is the key to successful implementation of any standard. While central government must have the role of safeguarding standards or policy and supervising implementation, the actual practical day-to-day control will have to be in local hands. This section therefore briefly explores the capacities of the different levels of government and the merits of devolved handling of a national instrument for hygiene and sanitation (promotion).

4.5.1. Local Government in Somaliland and the Merits of Devolution

“Local knowledge for local problems” essentially summarises the impetus for decentralising government. Strong local government has in most countries improved governance in general and certainly contributed to a higher efficiency and better participation of the governed. ‘Good Governance’ is best achieved by local governance, and can become a vital cornerstone for democracy in a country that is still lacking capacity and resources.

As became evident from the discussions with the various actors, local government is still neglected by development partners and central government. Acknowledging their crucial role, though, and working in close cooperation with local government offices has proven to be highly beneficial. An international NGO that has worked with the same municipal and district authorities for several years reports significant strengthening of capacity and in return considerable contribution to development in their constituency. This experience is replicated by the reports of development actors that are giving direct support to municipal and district structures. Local government therefore surely can be – and in light of their direct links to the final beneficiaries arguable should be – in charge of and empowered to deliver local development.

¹² Elledge, M. F. and R. Schertenleib (2003). "Sanitation Policies." IRC Thematic Overview Paper.

¹³ Boroma Regional Hygiene and Sanitation Workshop (January 2005), Report forthcoming

4.5.2. Central Government in Somaliland and the practical Limits of Capacity

Central government in Somaliland is seen as too far away and unaware of local issues, and at the same time as too weak to give significant support to local development activities. It was said that there is too much emphasis on controlling interventions from the centre by following the 'line' ministry structure and not devolving technical decision power to the districts and municipalities. This to a certain extent is changing with the established policies for water and health, and the process of decentralisation as defined in the constitution and enacted in the law. Arguably, central government in Somaliland is still in a transition phase from when it had to manage all aspects of development to the fairly new situation of having municipal and district councils that grow in capacity and strength. The water and the health policies demonstrate that central government understands the principle of keeping control of the nation while devolving responsibilities and power to the lower levels to avoid the bottlenecks of centralised ruling. At the same time ministry staff are still building their capacity to be the guides and guardians of what is happening in the country, evolving from managers to policy makers. This role, in line with the global experience of government decentralisation will over time – and with assistance through training and expertise – make central government in Somaliland more efficient in its new role than it is now.

4.5.3. Local v Central Implementation

In terms of who should be in charge of implementing 'Best Practices', National Standards or a National Sanitation Policy the verdict therefore is clear. Only local government will have the knowledge and, increasingly, the skills to 'localise' a national document without endangering its objectives. This, however, needs support that is yet to be given by the international community. Most development partners bypass municipal and district authorities and work directly with community groups. This may have been preferable and even advantageous in the conflict and post-conflict phase, but is now a barrier to development. The experience of other countries underline this argument; development partners in Kenya work with district councils and require their consent and participation to be allowed to implement development projects. The results are adequate interventions that target real needs without draining capacity at a central level that is better used for improving and making policy. Somaliland at this stage in its development needs a clear commitment of working with local government.

5. TOWARDS A NATIONAL SANITATION POLICY¹⁴

This paper has analysed the opinion of a variety of stakeholders in hygiene and sanitation in Somaliland. In the course of this analysis the key deficiencies in the sector and in the wider environment of managing development in the country have emerged. These gaps are serious barriers to improving the living standards of all Somalilanders beyond hygiene and sanitation and must be addressed.

The opinion of almost all partners consulted in this study is clear. There must be a stronger role for the government in Somaliland in ensuring a common approach. This stronger role has to be predominantly played by the local government structures, and is certainly also the responsibility of all development partners.

A stronger Role for the Somaliland Government	The Responsibility of all Development Actors
<p><i>Central government must guide more:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More standard-setting and policy-making ○ Proactive involvement in development planning <p><i>Local government must have more acceptance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boost influence of local government (Rules) ○ Define the interaction of development actors and local government <p><i>Vicious to virtuous cycle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved structure (Rules) - more government participation ○ More government participation - increasing capacity ○ Increasing capacity - improved structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accept current government weakness ○ Acknowledge that respect builds capacity ○ Development is more than just a product or service, but a process that needs commitment ○ Capacity building must not end at community level ○ Include local authorities ○ Support a rules-based interaction

Figure IV – A stronger Role for Government

A National Sanitation Policy would be the most suitable instrument to tackle the structural problems in the sector, and it would be able to build on and expand the successful establishment of policies in the water and the health sector. Beyond hygiene and sanitation this will further strengthen a government that still lacks capacity and has the potential to empower local government.

Lesser documents have been suggested. It is doubtful that they will achieve a concerted approach for hygiene and sanitation (promotion) as well as a policy can. It is therefore recommended to pursue the formulation of policy to further structure in the hygiene and sanitation sector in Somaliland. The following section draws from the experience of other countries to give a set of options for the process in Somaliland.

¹⁴ For ease of reading the expression ‘Sanitation Policy’ will be used throughout. This term is most commonly used in the literature. Other common terms are ‘Environmental Health Policy’ or ‘Hygiene and Sanitation Policy’.

5.1. SANITATION POLICIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Poor hygiene and sanitation remains an obstacle to economic development in most low-income and poor countries. It has been recognised that strategic approaches are needed at the national level to sustainably improve the access to appropriate facilities and training. In Africa and elsewhere, the last decade has therefore seen an unprecedented drive for national policies regulating issues of hygiene and sanitation. These policies were not necessarily drawn up *de novo*, but they – often for the first time - integrated existing standards, guidelines and regulations into a national document that provided structure and, above all, a basis for concerted action.

A typical example for this approach is Kenya. While it had a number of regulations and guidelines relating to hygiene, sanitation, and environmental health, it is only now integrating them into a unified national document¹⁵. A similar process is underway in Uganda, where a draft National Environmental Health Policy has been formulated to integrate existing documents into a national instrument, thus improving coherence and implementation.

It is clear that the move to national sanitation policies is recent, and the potential for experience sharing and learning from other countries' efforts is high. The following table¹⁶ briefly summarises the efforts in a number of African countries.

Country	Policy / Status	Government Branch	Focus Areas
Botswana	Environmental Health Policy (Active)	Ministry of Health	Service Delivery Relationship of Ministry of Health with other Stakeholders Roles of Town/District/Local Councils as service providers
Eritrea	Environmental Health Policy (Not implemented)	Ministry of Health	Not clearly defined
Ethiopia	Sanitation Policy (In preparation)	Ministry of Health	Not yet published
Ghana	Environmental Sanitation Policy (Active)	National Coordination Council under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Environmental sanitation as a sub-sector of development policy Strengthening of the community's role Private sector participation in service delivery
Kenya	Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Policy (in preparation)	Ministry of Health	Information, Education and Communication Improving technology and mobilising resources
South Africa	Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (Active)	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry with an inter-sectoral 'National Sanitation Task Team'	Sanitation as community responsibility Local government is responsible for service delivery Central government ensures service provision Focus on facilities, less on software
Tanzania	None	Some sanitation regulation under Ministry of Health	
Uganda	Environmental Health Policy (Draft)	Ministry of Health	Focus on facilities, less on software

¹⁵ Kenya has finalised work on its 'Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene (ESH) Policy in 2004. It falls under the Ministry of Health and has been developed by a multidisciplinary team involving several government ministries and other national and international stakeholders

¹⁶ The information is taken from WHO documents on national environmental health efforts (http://www.afro.who.int/des/phe/country_profiles/)

5.2. A CHOICE OF OPTIONS

The processes towards a national sanitation framework in other countries show a variety of options for content, horizontal responsibility (between Ministries), and vertical responsibility (between central and local government). Evidently, the final outcome depends on the individual situation.

5.2.1. Horizontal Responsibility: The integration of all sectors at central level

The majority of countries put their Ministry of Health (or the respective equivalent) in charge of sanitation policies. While this assigns clear responsibility it may not make full use of synergistic effects of a multi-sectoral approach. Administratively this, however, is complex and it is understandable why clear assignment to one ministry is preferred by most. These policies then address how this ministry or department interacts with the other stakeholders.

Two countries are notable exceptions. South Africa formed a 'National Sanitation Task Team' that integrates all national departments with responsibilities for providing sanitation services¹⁷. The team is led by the Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry¹⁸, but works in its own right. Ghana established a 'National Environmental Sanitation Coordination Council' that is strongly focussed on implementation of policy. It is based outside the sector departments in the Ministry for Local Government and Rural Development. Both examples show that there is an alternative to putting one ministry in charge.

5.2.2. Vertical Responsibility: Levels of Implementation

The majority of drafted or existing sanitation policies assign the responsibility for actual service delivery to local government. This, as discussed in Section 4 above, is a logical consequence of understanding the importance of local knowledge for solving local problems. However, the assignment of responsibilities in itself is not sufficient, as the several examples from the above list of countries prove. South Africa struggles with giving sufficient means to local government authorities. They generally lack the technical, managerial and financial capacity to sufficiently address sanitation needs¹⁹. Uganda's framework suffers from similar constraints. Here, in addition to limited local capacity, the policy lacks conceptual strength for local implementation and focuses predominantly on the national level. Ghana is targeting this general deficiency by giving a stronger role to the private sector. While this may avoid the bottleneck of limited local capacity, it requires even stronger policy and supervision capacity.

It is clear from these examples that various options can be chosen for setting up a national policy, running it, and implementing the actual delivery of services. None, however, seems to be perfect and the shortcomings must be addressed in the individual context. This is an important lesson to be taken to the development of policy in Somaliland. A suitable model should be found that may draw on the experience of other countries, but ensures that the local strengths and weaknesses are taken into account to avoid the problems some national policies are facing for their implementation.

¹⁷ Health, Education, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Housing, Water Affairs and Forestry, Provincial and Local Government, and Public Works

¹⁸ Department of Water Affairs and Forestry of South Africa *The Development of a Sanitation Policy and Practice in South Africa* (3rd July 2002)

¹⁹ Elledge, M. F., F. Rosensweig, et al. (2002). Guidelines for the Assessment of National Sanitation Policies. Washington D.C., Environmental Health Project.

5.4. HOW SOMALILAND CAN LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES

As outlined above, Somaliland at present has three ministries that are involved in Hygiene and Sanitation and its local government is newly established and has a significant lack of capacity. A national sanitation policy has to take this into account. While this is a task for the actual policy making process, two key observations can be made at this stage. Firstly, the involvement of the three ministries should be utilised rather than over-regulated. Instead of assigning the responsibility to one ministry, an inter-sectoral body, like in South Africa, should be considered. Certainly, it will be needed for the formulation of policy, but – as in South Africa – it could then continue to implement it. Secondly, the weakness of local government should be taken into account and not too much responsibility for implementation should be assigned to it at this stage. Development partners at this time are the implementers of projects to improve hygiene and sanitation, and local government could be empowered to fully utilise this capacity rather than having to get involved in implementation. In practice this could happen by giving local authorities more control over project design and implementation, in the process lessen the burden for central government and improving coordination at the level where it is most crucial.

5.5. THE PROCESS OF POLICY MAKING

*“Policy making is an inherently messy process. Rarely does policy change happen according to a well-conceived linear plan.”*²⁰ This statement should be kept in mind when starting the process of designing a national sanitation policy for Somaliland. The process will have to be flexible, and therefore the structures carrying it out must be adaptable. Again, the experience of other countries is educational. South Africa has allowed substantial time and participation in the making of its policy. The ‘National Sanitation Task Team’ sought the input of all stakeholders, and then published a ‘White Paper’ on sanitation policy for public scrutiny. Only then was national policy formulated. Kenya has chosen to use outside expertise for the formulation of its policy. Both processes have its merits. In the past, Somaliland has chosen the faster way of using outside expertise. In the context of the country this has substantial merit. The intellectual base, due to the civil war, is still poor with only few academics having come back to work in Somaliland. Also, the political system is evolving and mechanisms for public participation in policy processes are still weak. At the same time the geographical and demographical dimensions allow outside experts to quickly get access to various stakeholders and thus practice a similarly inclusive and participatory approach. The successful establishment of the Roads and the Water Policy by using outside expertise is a case in point. It seems that this faster process is, for the time being, more beneficial for Somaliland, as it takes less time and resources. The policy framework of the country needs strengthening, and an efficiently developed sanitation policy can thus contribute to the existing political stability. However, a national team comprising the key sectoral ministries and local government should be formed to accompany the policy making process and facilitate its way through the legislative structure.

²⁰ Elledge, M. F., F. Rosensweig, et al. (2002). Guidelines for the Assessment of National Sanitation Policies. Washington D.C., Environmental Health Project at page 66

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the following process is recommended:

- Create momentum and ownership for a national sanitation framework through an initial workshop that aims to define draft contents and implementation of policy (*will take place in March 2005*)
- Identify an international agency that is committed to carrying the process forward together with the Somaliland government
- Create an inter-sectoral policy working group in the Somaliland government
- Use this paper and the outcome of the workshop to lobby for donor support for national policy development
- Develop terms and a time frame for policy development with outside expertise
- Draft a national policy, in a joint effort of the policy working group and outside experts with the following key considerations:
 - Ensure integration of all sectors and avoid competition
 - Ensure that local government is empowered to guide implementation, but is not overloaded with responsibilities that exceed their capacity
 - Ensure that all existing documents are integrated into the policy to avoid duplicating previous efforts²¹
 - Clearly define the limits of a sanitation policy and point out needs for further regulation
- Taking into account the complexity of a sanitation policy (as opposed to the more clearly defined water and roads policies) consider an adaptation period in which the policy can be tested and refined
- Establish legislation to support the policy

²¹ The Ministry of Health and Labour has drafted a preliminary policy document in 2000; other documents like the PHAST/CHAST concepts could be annexed as they are, effectively becoming national standards

7. Individuals and Offices consulted

	NAME	POSITION / ORGANISATION
GOVERNMENT OF SOMALILAND	Ali Abdi Odowaa	Director General Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources
	Ali Sheikh	Director of Public Health Ministry of Health and Labour
	Abdullahi Abdi Nakruma	Regional Health Officer (Hargeisa) Ministry of Health and Labour
	Abdi Yassin	Regional Health Officer (Burao) Ministry of Health and Labour
	Abdirahman Mohamed Mal	Director General Ministry of Education
	Abdi Ahmed Idle	Mayor of Burao
	Mohamed Ali	Head, Burao Sanitation Department
	Mohamed Jama	Mayor of Odweine
	Abdi Jama Du'ale	Mayor of Berbera
	Dr. Mohamed Nour Arrale	Engineer, Berbera Water Agency
National NGOs	Nimco	Somaliland Red Crescent Society
	Ifrah	Somaliland Red Crescent Society
	Ahmed Ibrahim Awale	Candlelight
	Abdulkader J. Tukale	Nagaad
	Ifrah Khaly Barre	COSONGO (Consortium of Somaliland NGOs)
	Ismail Hussein Omar	RUCCON (Rural & Urban Concern)
International NGOs	Dirk Schrader	German Red Cross, Hargeisa
	Britta Girgensohn-Minker	German Red Cross, Nairobi
	Andrea Berloff	COOPI, Nairobi
	Dr. Hassan Ismail Yusuf	COOPI, Boroma
	Rachel De Souza	CEFA, Nairobi
	Robert Hughes	CEFA, Erigavo
	Abebaw Zeleke	Save the Children UK, Hargeisa
	Jan-Erik Wänn	Danish Refugee Council, Hargeisa
	Dr. Ahmed A. Elmi	Danish Refugee Council, Hargeisa
	Jitendra Panda	International Cooperation for Development IDC, Hargeisa
Günther Wirth	German Agro Action, Hargeisa	
European Commission	Christoph Langenkamp	EC Delegation Somalia Operations, Nairobi
	Laban Onangno	EC Delegation Somalia Operations, Nairobi
	Ahmed Washington	EC Liaison Office, Hargeisa
United Nations	Pranab Shah	UNICEF, Nairobi
	Ibrahim Abdullahi Ali	UNICEF, Hargeisa
	Safia Jibrell	UNICEF, Hargeisa
	Filiep Decorte	UN Habitat, Hargeisa
	Hari Paudel	UNDP, Hargeisa
	Eng. Abdullahi A. Obsiye	WHO, Hargeisa
	Leo van der Velden	WFP, Nairobi

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