NEIGHBORHOOD WATER MANAGEMENT IN LIMA, PERU

Compiled by: Mariel Mendoza
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In Lima, Peru 159,189 homes (7.3%) have inadequate public network water supply and are supplied by a tanker trucks, rivers, wells, water from neighbors or other sources (INEI 2018: 101). This policy brief highlights how the current urban water policies do not include, monitor or support significant sections of urban community or neighborhood water management in Lima—thereby affecting the quantity and quality of water consumed by poor people in peri-urban areas.

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SMALL WATER PROVIDERS INFLUENCE WATER GOVERNANCE

- Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), will require investments in infrastructure, but also must include small scale water providers and their organizations in the urban water governance.
- Population growth and the rate of urbanization are highest in low- and middle-income countries (WWAP 2019: 24). Peri-urban areas have many different types of small-scale water providers. The state must support and monitor them to ensure safe drinking water for all.
Research about access to water in peri-urban areas is relevant for decision-makers and managers, water regulators, engineers and planners.

WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH FOCUS?

This research analyzes the case of Las Animas’s “Water Committee” to understand inequities in drinking water supply and sanitation in peri-urban areas. This organization provides drinking water to the settlement of Las Animas Hill, one of the 113 slums that exist in Puente Piedra, a district located in northern Lima. Analyzing this type of organization can help to exemplify problems of similar organizations.

WHAT WERE THE RESEARCH METHODS?

This study was conducted with a qualitative methodology. Specifically: ethnography, in-depth interviews, stakeholder analysis and systematic review of key policy documents. Interviews and field observations were conducted with water operators, officials, residents of “Las Animas” and water specialists (consultants and scholars).

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

Current urban water policies in Lima favor concepts such as “efficiency”, “economies of scale” and technical knowledge while considering community water management inferior or inefficient. Consequently, the institutional framework focused only on the public water company, Sedapal, operating in Lima, while other forms of management are considered to only be relevant or allowable in rural areas (Decreto Legislativo N°1280).

There are various small alternative water providers, community or private management in peri-urban areas where Sedapal is not established. In Puente Piedra, 22.8% of homes do not have water through a public home network (INEI 2018:384). Las Animas’s “Water Committee” is an example of organization that gives water service to 630 homes for one or two hours every two days with homes paying approximately two dollars per month. This amount is affordable for vulnerable families and five times less than what poor families pay for water from tanker services. However, this amount does not allow the committee to invest in water quality control and improve infrastructure.

The Animas’s “Water Committee” was the result of a past urban water policy. An international project involving the European Economic Community, the French and Peruvian Government and Sedapal was started after the cholera outbreak in 1992. It lasted from 1993 to 2001 and completed 261 micro projects in Lima. The project built a 50 m³ reservoir and networks for neighborhoods of 250 homes, one pylon for every 50 homes and water provision 30 to 40 liters per person per day and created the Neighborhood Committee of Drinking Water Administration (COVAAPs). In 2003, 157 committees worked: 120 remained autonomous but only 37 could be connected (Sedapal et al 2006: 14). When the project finished, international cooperation ended and Sedapal dissociated because it cannot invest outside its jurisdiction. This resulted in a lack of technical support and zero maintenance of water networks, negatively affecting residents' water service. Years later, their water and sewerage system were declared "informal".
There is no institution that monitors the water quality of alternative water systems in Lima. The fee collected by the committee does not allow them to pay the high costs to measure the water quality of their well. This highlights the inequalities between users of Sedapal and those of small alternative systems who do not know the quality of the water they drink, but trust and expect Sedapal to connect them soon.

Political interests influence the development of water projects. “Programa Agua para Todos (PAT) as a political promise of Alan García’s 2016 election campaign. PAT accelerated studies, created water delivery devices, and cut technical control procedures to expedite the execution of projects (Law N° 28870). However, this delayed its execution because the technical studies presented deficiencies, contractors entered into disputes or arbitration proceedings with Sedapal, the deadlines for execution extended for years and promoted corruption. The Las Animas project has been delayed for more than ten years, despite a budget of $6,000,000.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The state should survey and quantify how many water operators are in peri-urban areas, this will allow the state to monitor the quantity and quality of the water they offer to the neighborhoods, while waiting to be connected to Sedapal.
- There are advances in the expansion of coverage of water services in Lima, however the city continues to grow, especially in peri-urban districts. Urban water policies and services require sustainability oriented urban planning.
- The state must provide technical assistance and financing to neighborhood organizations that manage drinking water in peri-urban areas. This helps to improve people’s health and promotes hand washing that prevents various diseases. In addition, the World Health Organization (2017) indicates that investments in water and sanitation generate a return of US $ 4.3 for every dollar spent on these services, which reflects the reduction in health costs for individuals and society, increase productivity and increased participation in the workplace.

REFERENCES


WWAP (2019). Programa Mundial de Evaluación de los Recursos Hídricos de la UNESCO. Informe Mundial de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Desarrollo de los Recursos Hídricos 2019: No dejar a nadie atrás. París, UNESCO.