Strengthening integrity in the water sector

Evidence from CoST Assurance

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21 May 2021
Outline

1. Introduction to CoST
   *Who, What and How*

2. Common integrity issues in water infrastructure
   *Our sample of water projects*
   *Common integrity issues*
   *Impacts*

3. How change can happen

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Introduction to CoST
Who we are and what we do

A global initiative

A multi-stakeholder approach

Spaces for participation and inclusion

Infrastructure that is resilient, inclusive, sustainable and leaves no-one behind
How do we do it?

**Multi-stakeholder Working**
Government, industry and civil society work together.

**Disclosure**
Disclosure of information using the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (CoST IDS) and OC4IDS format.

**Social Accountability**
Use of information by civil society for accountability.

**Assurance**
Independent third-party review of projects to assess quantity and quality of disclosure, and identify red flags.

Better value for money & better quality services
Common integrity issues in water infrastructure
Our sample of water projects

• 46 projects between 2016 and 2021 (11% of the total projects) $430m.

• Afghanistan, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Malawi, Thailand, Uganda.

• Improvement of sewage systems, expanding water supply, construction of water facilities & water kiosks, drilling wells & boreholes, flood relief systems, developing dams & reservoirs.

• Procuring entities: Federal Entities (76%), Municipalities (17%) and State Development Agencies/Funds (7%).
Common integrity issues

**Transparency**

- 50% of CoST IDS
- Lowest Uganda (7.5%)
- Highest Thailand (90%)
- Afghanistan: transparency level depends on the PE
- Trend: less transparency as the project evolves

**Accountability**

- Scattered information not systematically disclosed
- A data environment with accessibility challenges
- Risks for accountability
Common integrity issues

**Planning**

- 30 out of 46 projects.
  - No feasibility studies
  - Additional works due to inadequate preparation

**Tender**

- Irregularities
- Inconsistencies
- Questionable decisions
Flood Relief Project, Songkhla Province, Thailand

- Project to improve reservoir capacity and increase water storage for agriculture
- EIA not available – questions if it was developed
- Community not consulted or informed
- Social conflicts related to fair amount of land compensation

- Issues also identified:
  - ecosystem destruction
  - extinction of wildlife
  - road collapse
  - severe dust
  - vibration

- Villagers can’t use the water from the canal
- Project not finalised - impact on expected delivery/operation
- Impact on water availability
Impacts

Construction of Water Supply Network in Faizabad, Afghanistan

- Project to build a drinking water supply network
- Design problems: inappropriate location of valve boxes and reservoirs by the mountains
- Lack of protective walls exposing the structure to water flood and rock fall risks

- Incomplete survey and environmental assessments
- Assurance also identified lack of maintenance
- ‘Blind’ design + no adequate assessments + no public consultation + no maintenance + climate change =
  - Risks for project operation
  - Risks for water availability
How change can happen
A sea change

• CoST approach prompted the National Water Authority (NWARA) in Afghanistan to establish a ‘backup unit’

• In less than one year:
  • 302 projects surveyed
  • 215 projects designed

• Less room for malpractices in planning, tender and delivery

• Lower risks of non-operational projects

A bit closer to achieving SDG 6

Senior engineers from the design unit and backup unit discuss NWARA projects
Recommendations

Improve transparency of water infrastructure, applying CoST internationally recognised standards where information is disclosed systematically, on a consolidated manner and throughout the project cycle.

Leverage stakeholder participation to help identify risks and grey areas in the planning and delivery of water infrastructure.