Intersectoral involvement in water sanitation innovations

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While the MDG's have resulted in a large number of people gaining access to water and sanitation services, more than 700 million people still lack access to improved sources of drinking water, nearly half in sub-Saharan Africa.[1] Of the 69 countries not on track to meet the 2015 MDG goals for water and sanitation, 37 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Among these Sub-Saharan African countries there remain inequalities of water delivery and sanitation services, especially between urban and rural populations.[1] Several papers have emphasized the importance of focusing on rural populations within sub-Saharan Africa, for example stressing that "National governments should develop strong rural drinking water quality monitoring and surveillance programs to ensure that uncontaminated water is available in sub-Saharan African communities."[2]

The water and sanitation situation in rural Zambia is far off the MDG target, with only 34% of the population receiving improved access to sanitation since the MDG implementation.[1] Zambia has significant geographical, political, cultural and technical challenges, which contribute, to the success or failure of water sanitation innovation implantation strategies in the local context.

My scholarly paper investigates the importance of intersectoral involvement in water sanitation innovation implementation strategies. While there are have been several promising technological and policy innovations implemented in rural Zambia, these have been largely unsuccessful. I use the socio-ecological framework to highlight some of the factors contributing to the unique local context of rural Zambia, and the difficulties of assuming simple linear transfer of innovations.

Despite the availability of technologies to improve access to water and sanitation, many people continue to practice open defecation and lack clean, safe water. With greater intersectoral coordination when developing implementation strategies, innovations can be better fit to the local context and likely provide more sustainable improvement to WASH access for many.

Global Health Relevancy

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the burden of disease due to poor water sanitation remains very high, with diarrheal diseases resulting in the death of approximately 1.4 million children annually, more than AIDS, malaria and measles combined.[2] Poor water management and sanitation are at the root of massive global health issues relating to waterborne diseases, which can be largely prevented by adequate water and sanitation services