

Myths of Rural Water Supply and directions for change

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Summary

- Much has been achieved, but it is time for change.
- Sustainability remains elusive.
- New ways and directions are beginning to emerge.



The 'conventional approach' to RWS (1)

Output-focused

MDG coverage targets, focusing on 'improved' water points and numbers of people 'served'.

1.3 billion people use boreholes, 80% of them are in rural areas, mostly using handpumps.



The 'conventional approach' to RWS (2)

Heavily subsidised

Capital cost often subsidised 90-100%.

Communities contribute labour and locally available materials.



The 'conventional approach' to RWS (3)

Community-managed Users (WUC) manage and maintain water point.

All post-construction finance is from consumers.



Observations on the 'conventional approach'

When asked, consumers demand better services.
We don't generally know how to advise on tariffs.
WUCs often run into subsequent difficulties.



Handpump maintenance – revenues

See Carter et al 2010 <http://www.washcost.info/page/1066>

Typically 50 user households
may each agree to pay
USD2.40 per annum.

—————→ USD120 per annum

A proportion of households
(say 10%) is exempted for
good reasons.

—————→ USD105 per annum

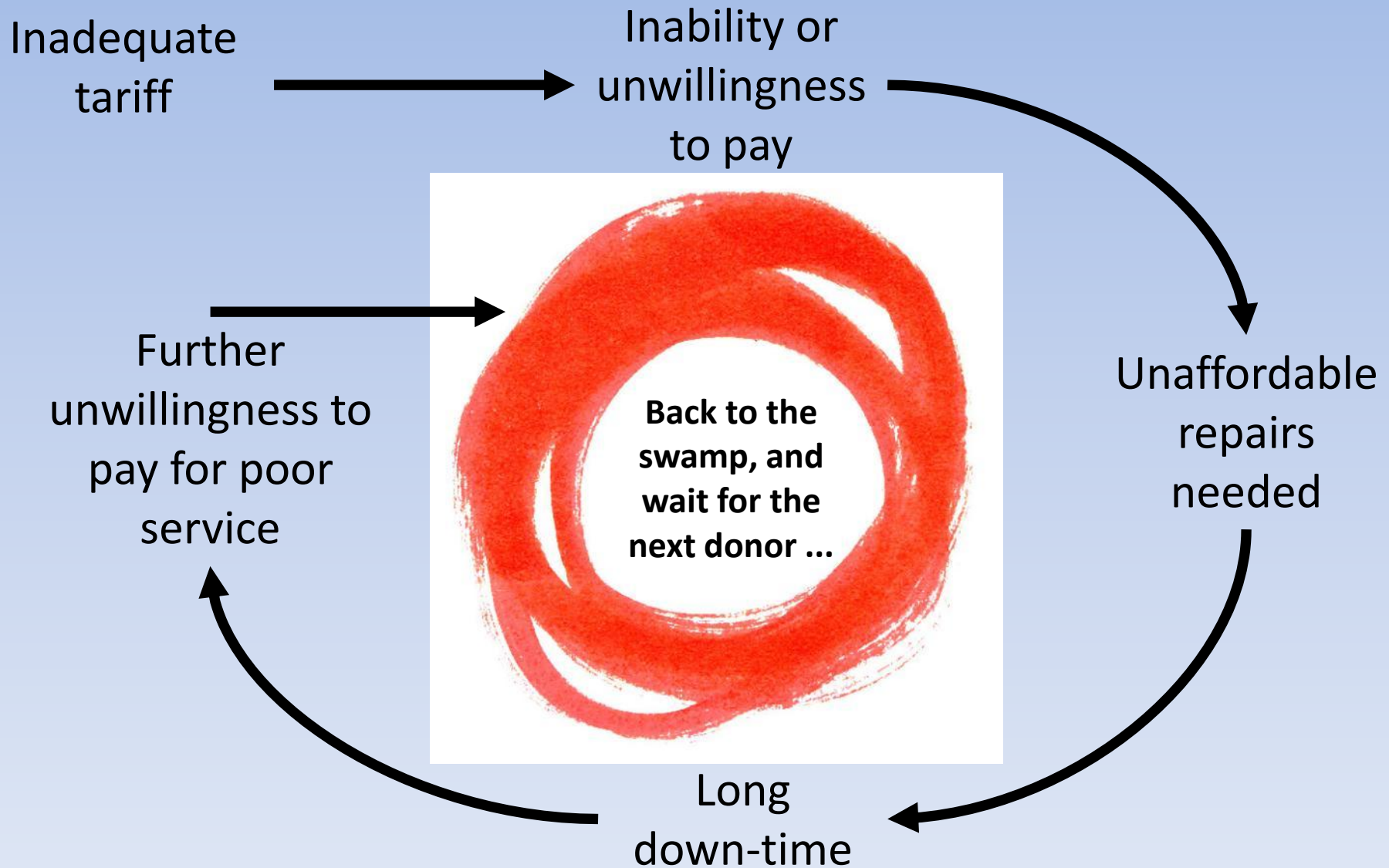
In some years, because of
drought, flood, pest or hail, → USD35 pa
no-one pays. (average)

Typical life-cycle
annual cost of
handpump USD235
(Baumann, 2006)

Can WASHCOST
give us a better
handle on this?



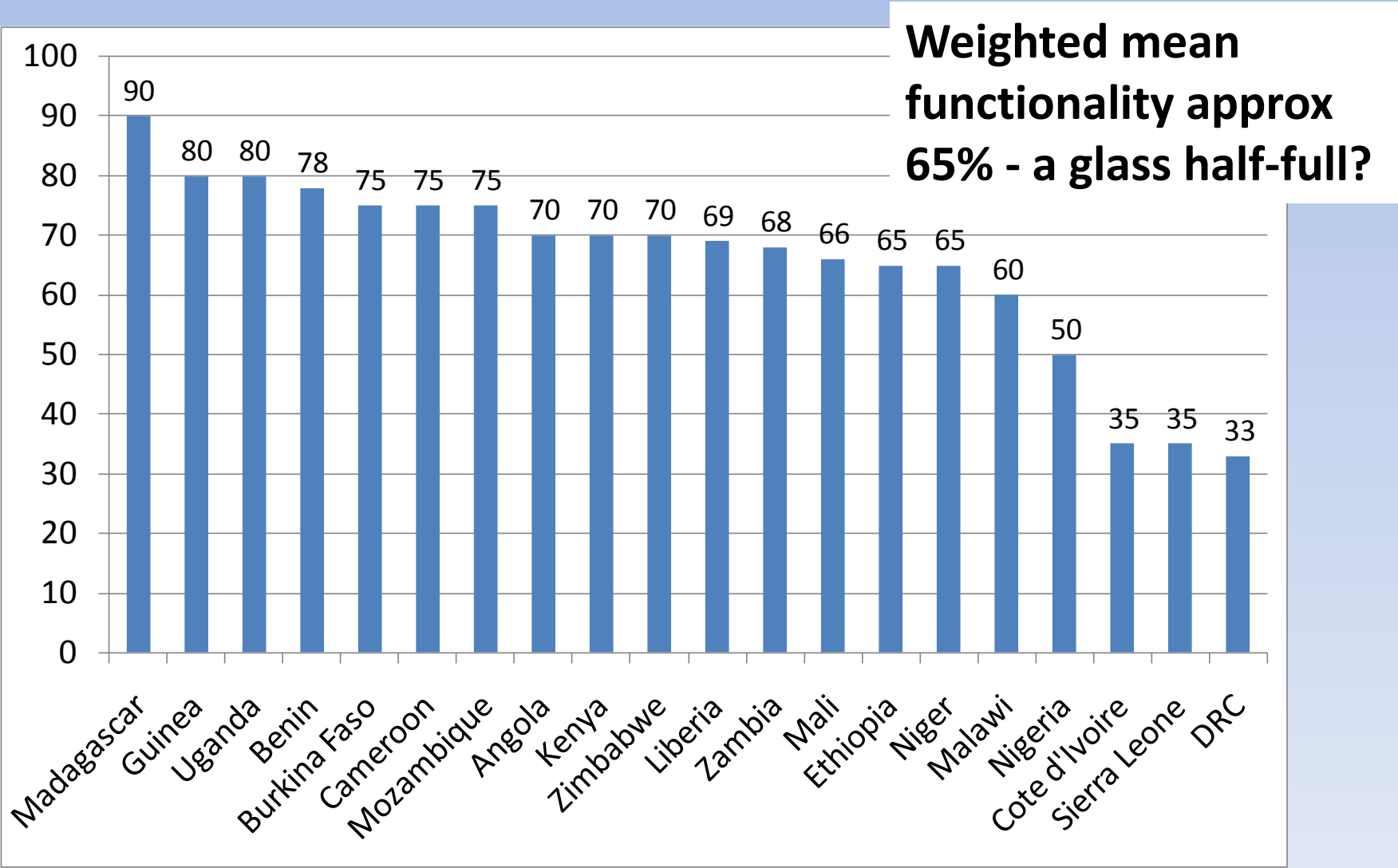
On tariffs and financial viability



Outcomes of the conventional approach

'Snapshot' functionality estimates – rural handpumps

[data collected by Joe Narkevic and Peter Harvey, published by the Rural Water Supply Network]

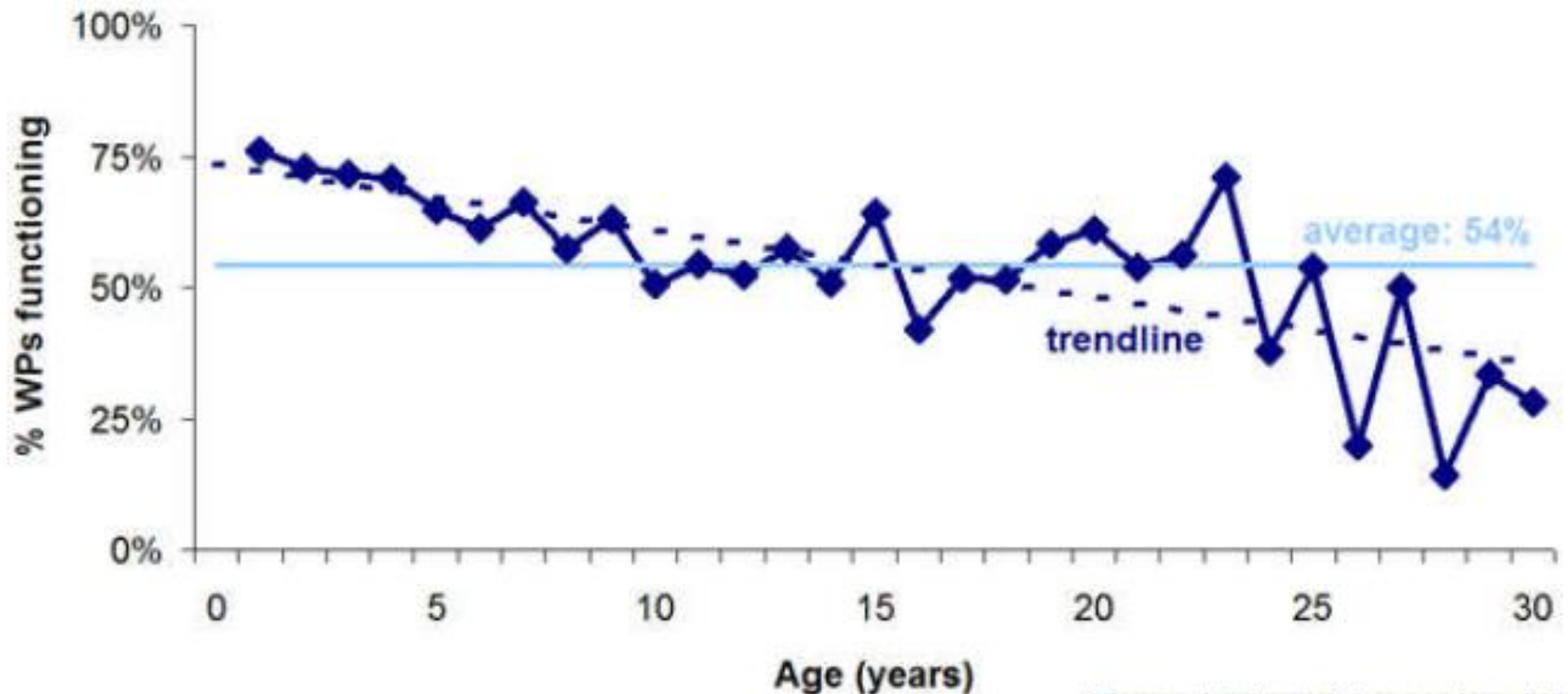


Outcomes – service half-life

Tanzania, rural water points in six districts

[data collected by Alexia Haysom, 2006, published by WaterAid Tanzania]

Functionality of rural waterpoints by age



Outcomes – the unserved

The water MDG has been met, but ...

- 780m are still unserved.
- 653m (84%) of the unserved are rural.
- 275m (42%) of the rural unserved are in sub-Saharan Africa, 139m (21%) in South Asia.
- It is likely that the least visible, the most remote and the most hard-to-serve continue unserved.

Myths of Rural Water Supply



Rural Water Supply Network

Perspectives No 4

RWSN Executive Steering
Committee

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Myths of the Rural Water Supply Sector



Three of the seven myths

- Building water supply systems is more important than keeping them working.
- Communities can always manage their facilities on their own.
- The best way to utilise public funds is to heavily subsidise hardware.

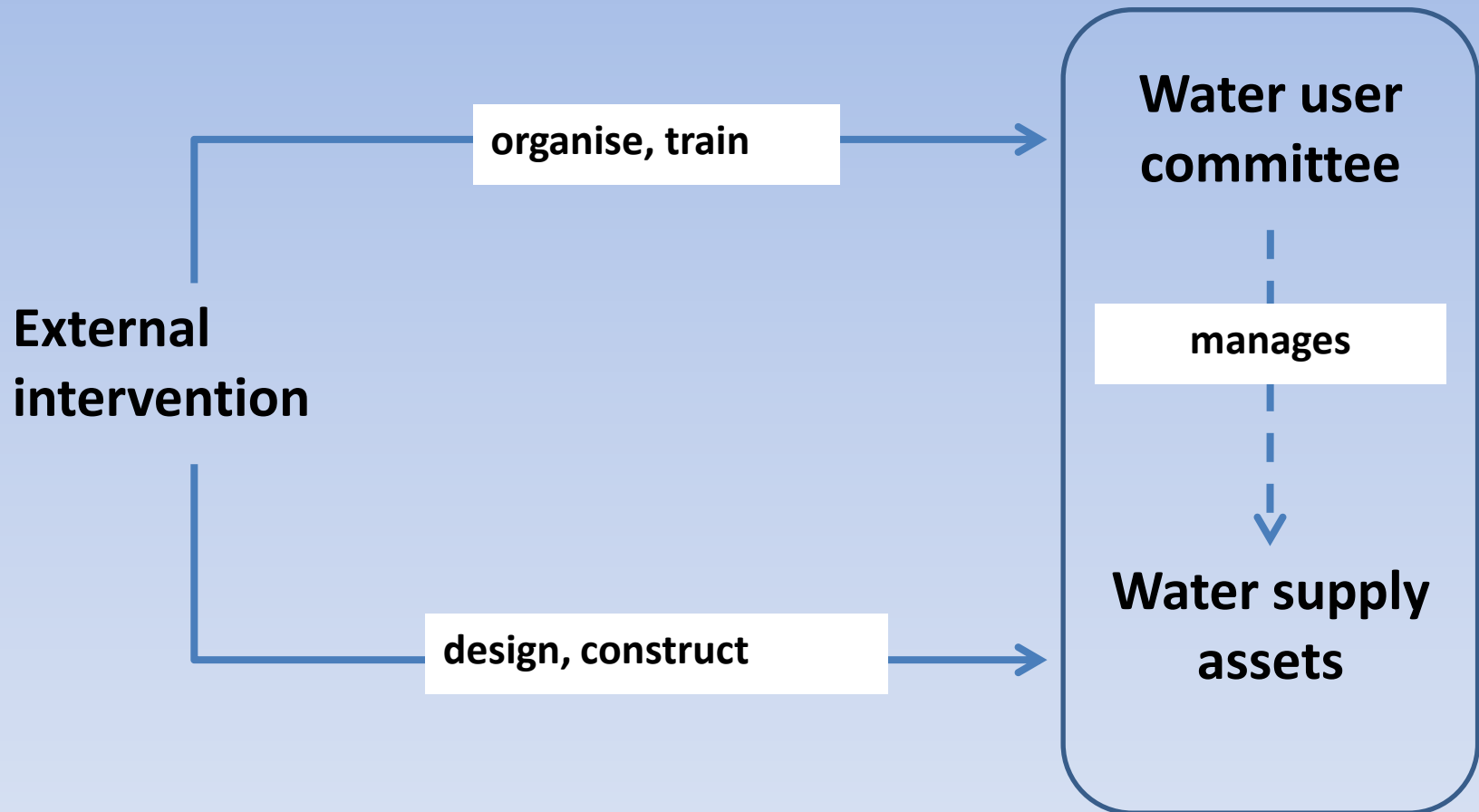
Building water supply systems is more important than keeping them working

Of course not, but ...

- Most public and NGO investments are capex.
- JMP counts people using improved water points.
- Governments count new water points constructed.
- Sustained service is not measured or reported.



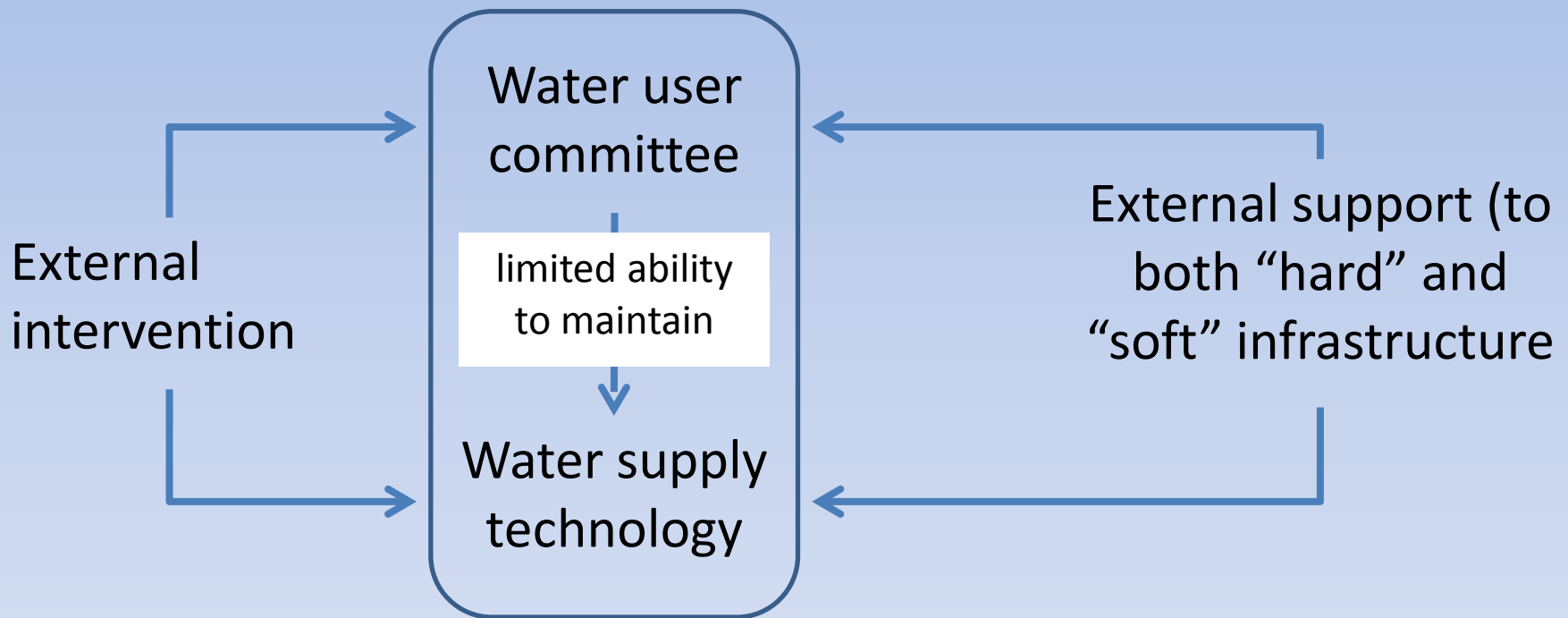
Communities can always manage their facilities on their own



The established community management model – tested and found wanting.

An alternative – community management ‘plus’

[after Erich Baumann, Skat/RWSN]



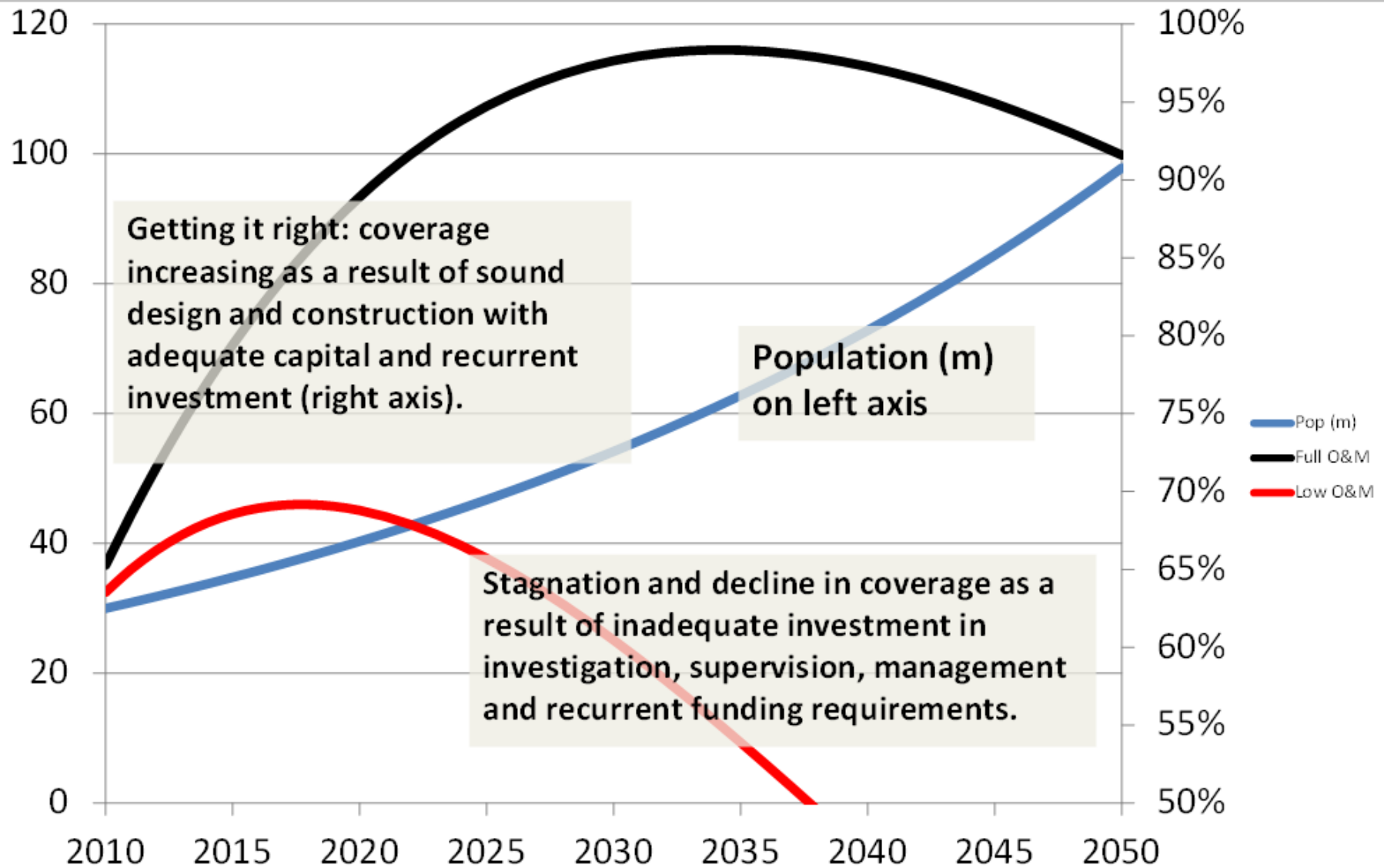
Recognising the support communities need, in terms of management, co-financing and technical assistance.

The best way to utilise public funds is to heavily subsidise hardware

Options for public investments

- (As now) mostly on capital investments to increase coverage.
- Co-financing with consumers, ie subsidise to a lower level, or encourage household investments without public subsidy (accelerated self-supply).
- Develop capacity for high quality investigation, supervision and contract management.
- Achieve better balance between capital and recurrent investments (including but not only capital maintenance).

Balancing capital with pre- and post-construction investments



What the consumer wants

Access – proximity,
social dimensions

Quantity – only possible
with improved access

Management burden –
within consumer capacity

Quality – but only
one of six aspects

Affordability
– water tariffs

Reliability – predictable
and permanent



Cf human rights normative criteria (General Comment 15):

‘the human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses’.

Evolution or revolution?

Public investment in physical infrastructure with community management has achieved a lot, but it is time for a step-change in performance.

We need to build on what has gone before, not discard it.



What needs to change?

- 'For all, for good' from the outset.
- Where community management is still appropriate, provide external support (CM+).
- Pursue other models of service delivery.
- Find viable (post-construction) financing solutions.
- National monitoring to capture desired outcomes, especially sustained service and inclusion.

Planning for permanence

- Think and plan for permanent service from the outset of all new interventions. This affects technology, management and financing arrangements, and what should be monitored.
- Be driven by the outcomes of continuing functionality and utilisation rather than only physical outputs.
- Don't get distracted by impacts!

Alternative models – self supply



Accelerated self-supply

- Recognises and encourages household and community initiatives.
- Provides promotion and technical assistance but no hardware subsidy.
- The water-equivalent of CLTS.

Watch out for webinar on June 12th to learn more about Self Supply.

Alternative models – CM+



Good practice in community-management

- Community management arrangements are adequately supported.
- Some external co-financing is in place.

Example is Kigezi Diocese Water and Sanitation Programme, Uganda.

Watch out for webinar on April 24th to learn more about Government of Ethiopia / Finland CoWASH Program.

Alternative models – standalone systems



Stand-alone systems

- Managed as businesses.
- Treats the consumer as a customer.
- Uses solar pumping and mobile phone / smart card payment technology.
- What arrangements for the poor?

Example Grundfos Lifelink <http://www.grundfoslifelink.com/index.html>

See webinar on May 22nd for more on this approach.

Alternative models – from CM to private operators



Large gravity schemes / multiple village schemes

- Retain water point committees.
- Scheme management committees or (semi) private operators.
- In the transition between community management and utility or private operator management.



Alternative models – rural learning from urban

Urban / small town operators extend into rural hinterland

- Blurs the boundary between urban and rural water supply institutions.
- Uses appropriately modified urban benchmarking and performance indicators for rural services.



Future directions

- Professionalisation in two senses
 - Better qualified and certified personnel.
 - Service delivery by professionally staffed organisations, moving away from community management.
- Reducing the management burden on consumers while assuring service standards.
- While designing tariff structures which recognise inability of some consumers to pay.

Thank you for listening!



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