

# Municipal planning and inter-institutional coordination for good water management

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### PITCH

Water distribution systems involve various actors. Access to water is a fundamental human right that materializes in a set of rules, laws and institutions that exercise shared, exclusive or concurrent competences at different levels of government and that make up the institutional framework for the management of basic services.

In Bolivia, although the intergovernmental competences are laid down, the expansion of services is limited by the lack of adequate inter-institutional coordination<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, this is partly due to the low intervention of municipal governments, which are responsible for providing drinking water and sewerage services. On the other hand, it is linked to the lack of sectoral and local planning in terms of investments in the construction of drinking water and sanitation systems, community social development, technical assistance, institutional strengthening and environmental health education. Through appropriate sectoral and local planning, it will be possible to reach the desirable joint participation of the sectors' actors, local authorities and the population in order to prioritize investments based on the most urgent needs for

construction, rehabilitation, training and institutional strengthening.

This policy brief is addressed to municipal authorities, mayors and municipal councilors, municipal and Public Enterprises for Water and Sanitation (EPSA for its acronym in Spanish) technical teams ; it seeks to contribute to the implementation of coordinated sectoral planning within the framework of their competences linked with the achievement of national coverage targets.

### ISSUES

As a result of the declaration of water as a fundamental human right, the 2025 Patriotic Agenda drafted by the government aims to achieve 100 % coverage in water and sanitation services at the national level, by 2025. Although significant investments were made in the sector between 2006 and 2019 to expand access to drinking water (BOB 13,669 million), the coverage only reaches 86% of the population, considering both urban and rural areas. This shows that participatory and concurrent planning from the local level is essential to meet the goals that were set. Investment by the central government alone is insufficient. It is necessary to activate the competence of municipalities, regardless of the size of their

population. They must have a sectorial plan that enables pre-planned public and/or private investment.

Specific local sectoral planning will generate greater associativity through the participation of the population, the sector's actors and local authorities, in order to clearly identify projects that require concurrent investment and which are necessary for the sector's development in connection to the needs of each municipality. This identification will also allow the prioritization of economic resources necessary for the implementation of projects not included in any official document by national authorities.

### METHODS

A study on the generation of institutional asymmetries in water management in the municipality of La Paz suggests that water supply crises are primarily the result of two elements: first, a breach in the legal framework that determines the functioning and competence of the institutions managing the resource and service; and secondly, the lack of inter-institutional coordination to implement and plan sectoral development.

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**Bolivia**, Latin America

**Themes:** Water, governance

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## RESULTS

The water supply crisis experienced in La Paz in 2016 highlighted the lack of inter-institutional coordination between the central government, the municipal government and the service operator, caused among other things by political tensions. Coordination is undoubtedly necessary, not only during critical water management situations. Coordination and convergence are also very necessary for expanding the service delivery, which does not only require infrastructure but also technical capacities to ensure the sustainability of the service. Therefore the provision and improvement of the service require a strategic guideline from the local level that would be the basis to plan and act in response to the immediate context.

A Municipal Water and Sanitation Plan is an integral and systemic response to the demands derived from population growth, it is the main strategic sectorial tool that, under the municipal government's leadership, will enable the achievement of the goals laid down in the Bolivian Constitution, the Sectoral Development Plan, the Social and Economic Development Plan and the 2025 Patriotic Agenda. A municipal water and sanitation plan has the possibility to guide sectoral planning,

taking into account the local demand, while enhancing concertation among the sectors' actors.

In order to increase the service in the short and medium term, the Municipal Water and Sanitation Plan must be the product of a comprehensive and participatory management in settings of coordination and promotion of strategic alliances between the State, the stakeholders and representatives of the municipality. Moreover, it should contain a set of structured and organized actions with both a quantitative and qualitative approach, prioritizing technical criteria, considering priority coverage, budget forecasting and a sustainability strategy aligned to the social context.

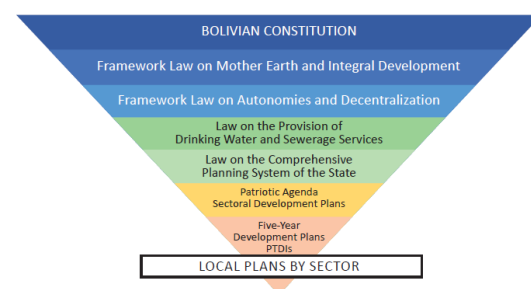
Municipalities do not always have the necessary resources to expand service coverage and usually require concurrent investment from the central and departmental governments. The absence of a Municipal Water and Sanitation Plan may involve the intervention of national bodies that are not aware of the needs of municipalities and often implement poorly planned projects that are of no use to the population. If the municipality has an investment

planning to increase coverage, the State has then the possibility of giving support through its institutional structure.

A sectorial plan will enable the identification of programs and projects in the field of infrastructure, community development, institutional strengthening, technical assistance, and environmental and health education in accordance with local needs to ensure a direct positive and sustainable impact on the population.

If coordinated with the other levels of government and acting concurrently, the Municipal Water and Sanitation Plan will reach a sustainable drinking water coverage goal as promoted by the 2025 Patriotic Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

**Figure 1 – Legal framework for the development of municipal plans for the water and sanitation sector**



Source: elaborated by the author

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Municipal Water and Sanitation Plan should:

- ▶ develop municipal laws and regulations for drinking water and basic sanitation services with a comprehensive, technical, social, environmental and sustainable approach,
- ▶ recommend technical, social and institutional policies to ensure the provision of sustainable drinking water and sanitation services in accordance with local contexts,
- ▶ include components, programs and projects to be implemented to achieve integrated management of drinking water and basic sanitation services, prioritizing investments according to their relevance and based on a consensus with political, social and institutional actors,
- ▶ seek financing from international donor entities both for the preparation of the plan and for the investments necessary to achieve the goals set out in national plans, within the framework of the competences set forth by the law.

<sup>1</sup> Le Gouill, C. (2017). La crise de l'eau à La Paz De la crise environnementale à la crise technique et politique. AFD, Papiers de Recherche, Paris.