

Integrity risks in professional borehole drilling

Writing on behalf of Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), Justine Haag and Marian Ryan, of Water Integrity Network, examine how preventing corruption in the professional borehole drilling can pave the way to sustainable infrastructure

Integrity risks can be high in professional borehole drilling projects, particularly the risk of corruption, but too often such risks are brushed over or not even acknowledged. However, we plan to discuss in detail some of the reasons why addressing corruption in professional borehole drilling is important.

Corruption contributes to poor delivery in groundwater development projects and is a factor in the failure within one year of construction of 15–30 per cent of newly built wells (UNICEF/Skat 2016).

The good news is that by acknowledging and addressing integrity risks from the earliest project stages, WASH managers in both government and NGOs can take steps to prevent these risks and ensure sustainable infrastructure.

CORRUPTION ADDS UP

Across the world, a great deal of money goes into the drilling of boreholes. At the local level, while it might appear at first glance that the money lost to corruption on small borehole drilling projects in rural or remote locations is limited, even insignificant, the impacts are certainly not. Corruption results not only in wasted money but, all too often, in sub-standard delivery of projects. This, in turn, results in downstream social, economic and environmental impacts.

From a purely financial perspective, corruption in groundwater development projects may result in inflated costs which undermine the financial sustainability of the project. Equally, corruption in decision-making processes may result in technical choices that ignore community needs, disregarding the local socio-cultural or economic context.



What effect does corruption have on borehole drilling?

oversight, resulting in poor-functioning and ultimately decaying, unsustainable infrastructure and water systems.

Ultimately, corruption can threaten food, water, and energy security, greatly impacting the poorest residents.

VULNERABILITY

Corruption can take place at a number of points in the project lifecycle.

The tendering process is well known to pose a high risk of corruption: project owners may demand or receive

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