



## Reforming the Nigerian Water and Sanitation Sector

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### Introduction

AN EXTENSIVE REVIEW of the Nigerian water supply and sanitation sector is provided in a recent (year 2001) assessment and analysis of the situation of children and women in Nigeria (Hodges, 2001). It reviews the outcome of nation-wide surveys such as the Multiple-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) of the Federal Office of Statistic (FOS) and UNICEF and the National Demographic Health Surveys (NDHS). It also notes that improvements have been made in rural water supply coverage due mainly to investments by the Federal, State and Local governments, UNICEF and other development partners. Low investment, poor maintenance and irregular power supply are shown to account for the declining level of access to safe water in urban and semi-urban areas. The situation with respect to sanitation is shown to be worse in the rural areas and declining in the urban areas chiefly due to low priority attached to sanitation at both community and policy level.

A participatory Stakeholders workshop organised by the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR) and the European Commission (EC) involving about 100 sector workers from the, National Planning Commission, representatives of the 36 States water supply agencies (both urban and rural), the EC and UNICEF confirmed this situation. It explored the reasons behind the apparent failure to consistently and effectively deliver WSS services to the citizens of Nigeria. The workshop, although dominated by water supply professionals, went through several steps of problem identification and analysis and, based on ranking, arrived at the 20 most important issues that could be grouped as follows:

**Policy and systems issues:** (1) no clear long-term sector programme at all levels; (2) no specific agency with role of sanitation; (3) no clear monitoring and database system/inadequate and unreliable data; (4) involvement of the FMWR in direct execution of water supply projects; (5) politicisation of implementation process;

**Co-ordination, planning and management issues:** (1) no co-ordination between service providers resulting in duplication of efforts and resources; (2) poor collaboration

between states and federal governments (and between states and local governments!); (3) poor planning; (4) poor policy implementation by government; (5) inadequate training of water delivery operators; (6) poor maintenance culture;

**Funding Issues:** (1) low investment by government on WSS; (2) inadequate funding of maintenance of WSS schemes;

**Community empowerment and management Issues:** (1) lack of sense of ownership by communities; (2) inadequate participation of women in rural water supply;

**Public-private partnership issues:** (1) inadequate private sector participation in WSS (2) incapable contractors involved in the execution of water supply projects/corruption contributes to high costs of WSS projects.

**Technical issues:** (1) Erratic power supply and high diesel cost associated with operations/high costs in production of water; (2) Nature of raw water; (3) inappropriate technology to meet given geophysical problems and;

### Main Challenges for the WSS Sector

Thus, taking the rural water supply and sanitation as a typical case, the main challenges are:

1. There are numerous programmes and projects being implemented by government and various multi-lateral/bilateral organisations and NGOs each pursuing their specific objectives and employing a range of strategies to suit their purposes. There is no comprehensive and coherent national programme framework to lend focus to these initiatives. This leaves the sub-sector wide open to developments that do not conform to standard norms and practices for the delivery of sustainable RWSS services.
2. There is poor co-ordination between relevant ministries and agencies at national and sub-national levels. Several sector related agencies have issued policy and strategy documents that are often stand-alone and do not cross-reference other relevant documents. Thus policies and implementation strategies are not co-ordinated between ministries and sometimes agencies work at cross-purposes.

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3. Decentralisation remains largely a principle rather than a practice (except in the limited successes achieved by UNICEF in cost sharing between states, LGAs and communities and by WaterAid in shared responsibilities between communities and LGAs based on the demand-responsive approach). Federal and State agencies commonly carry out direct implementation in communities of activities that should be done by LGAs. Thus, while roles and responsibilities have been delineated in existing policy documents, there is a demonstrable unwillingness to devolve authority and control along with these assigned responsibilities to the lower levels.
4. Significant imbalances exist between water supply on the one hand and sanitation and hygiene promotion on the other. Even within water supply, there is often undue use of highly mechanised borehole drilling to the neglect of more cost-effective service delivery means such as dug wells and spring protection. Furthermore, there exists a significant lack of capacity (in terms of knowledge, attitude and practice) at all programme levels (national, state and local government) for facilitating participatory programme implementation both at community and programme levels.
5. Adequate and regular funding and efficient utilisation of and accountability for funds by the three levels of government poses a major challenge to consistent implementation of activities. While communities have demonstrated both willingness and ability to meet up with their share of the investment/maintenance costs assigned by national policy at all the three levels of government are falling behind. Efficient and accountable use of resources remains largely a mirage mainly at the government agency level, the problem further compounded by corruption resulting in significant overpricing of contracts, over-invoicing of goods, poor supervision of implementation and little or no sanctions on erring officials.
6. Overall, there is little or no human resource capacity problem on the “hardware” aspects such as engineering, hydrogeology and sanitation technology. However, on the “software” sides such as policy formulation, management, sanitation and hygiene promotion and participatory development processes there are capacity gaps.
7. There are also political challenges to the delivery of sustainable RWSS services. Essentially because not all sections of the political leadership is on board on the policy and strategy issues of RWSS, there is often conflict between globally recognised principles such as water being an economic good, national policy principles such as cost sharing and community contributions on the one hand and political promises of free services based on, for example water supply being a social service, on the other hand.
8. Establishment of standards in certain areas (for example water quality, borehole drilling contract procurement and management practice, latrine construction, training) and compliance with some existing standards (for example handpump standards) remains a major problem.
9. Sub-sector monitoring and evaluation is still grossly inadequate. There has yet to be agreed a national monitoring and data base framework and there is significant paucity in certain data, for example water quality, while the integrity of most existing data is in doubt as noted by the DFID evaluation of the FGN/UNICEF WES programme. Evaluation of programmes and projects is often limited to those involving ESAs (due mainly to requirements of donors). Government programmes and projects hardly undergo any meaningful evaluation to assess their efficiency and impacts and to draw lessons for improvement in both policy and implementation.

### Ongoing Initiatives on WSS Sector Reform

The onset of democratic governance has witnessed increased investment in the sector by government and international development organisations who are partnering together in key sector reform initiatives. These include (i) the preparation of Integrated Water Resources Management Policy leading eventually to the enactment of a National Water Law; (ii) Sanitation Policy by FMWR; (iii) Sanitation and Environmental Health policy by Federal Ministry of Environment (FWEEnv); and (iv) Urban Water Sector Reform Project by the FMWR and the World Bank currently under preparation and to be implemented in initially six states; (v) UNICEF, in collaboration with WB and EC, is supporting the FMWR to prepare a RWSS Programmes Framework Strategy; (vi) Under the current FGN/EC co-operation agreement, the EC will support a sector wide approach characterised by budget support for the water and sanitation sector in six focal states and; (v) the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, has developed a Rural development policy and implementation strategy with a component on rural water supply and sanitation.

Overarching all these sector specific reform initiatives, is the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper by the FGN. The Interim version of the PRSP has recently been concluded and it maps out the strategy of poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

There are also several key WSS programmes ongoing within the country. These include the National RWS Programme of the FMWR (formerly the Improved Access Programme), the FGN/UNICEF WES Project for 22 states (which also includes a more intensive component in 4 states, Benue, Ekiti, Enugu and Jigawa, funded by DFID) and WSS programme of the European Commission (EC) under preparation for 6 states and focused on a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP). The World Bank is also currently assisting the Federal Government in the implementation of the Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation program. This program is on in three pilot States (Ebonyi, Katsina and Niger). Others are the recently concluded DFID-

funded WaterAid WSS Project, WSS Programme of WaterAid (a British NGO) and RWSS Project of Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) focused on guinea worm eradication in Oyo State.

### The Proposed WSS Reforms

To meet the challenges, there is a need to ensure the FGN co-ordinates all the existing reform processes and initiatives. Since many of the previous and the ongoing reform initiatives are discrete in nature, it is necessary to now formulate a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda for the country. This should be led by the FMWR and be agreeable to all major stakeholders to ensure that WSS is put on the path of steady development for the delivery of sustainable safe water and sanitation services. Such a reform agenda must have communities, the primary stakeholders, at the centre of the process.

Using RWSS as case study the expected reforms may be summed up as follows: *Planning of all RWSS activities will originate in the community through a participatory approach facilitated by dedicated multidisciplinary teams of LGA extension agents and Non-Governmental Organisations in a standard manner. A principal mechanism for this management will be effective gender balanced community WSS Committees. LGAs, through well established WSS Departments, States, through, well established RWSSAs, and Federal Ministries and agencies will all be focused on facilitating and supporting the communities through a well-developed national programme with clearly defined procedures and standards in which all stakeholders participate.* Achievement of this vision requires institutional reforms the objective of which should be the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness in RWSS service delivery management through decentralisation of management functions and provision of mechanisms for enhancing co-ordination, partnership and accountability. Ultimately, RWSS services should be delivered to communities in a sustainable way while the communities should be fully empowered for the management of these services. This will have the consequent impact of reduction in water-borne/water and sanitation related diseases, improved health, reduction in drudgery and workload of particularly women and children and, cumulatively, reduction in poverty.

It is proposed that some of the key elements of the reform agenda and process could include the following:

1. Streamlining and consolidating existing policy and regulatory documents to remove unnecessary duplications, conflicts and contradictions. The FMWR is currently working on several policy documents that are important. These are the water resources management policy (WRMP) (formulation of which has reached an advanced stage); a separate sanitation policy (development of which is initiated but experiencing some difficulties with progress); a separate rural water supply policy (planned to be developed) and the National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (is planned to be revised). While the need is recognised for

an overarching policy document such as the WRMP to underpin water resources management, the development of the water resources for various uses, particularly for water supply, and the accompanying sanitation and hygiene issues, need to be given clear policy focus devoid of unnecessary duplications.

2. The existing Water Resources Decree 101 of 1993 needs to be revisited, given the current democratic dispensation. It should be reviewed through proper legislative process so that an appropriate water law emerges that is founded on democratic principles and empowering communities (the real democrats!) to have greater say in the ownership, management and development of the water resources within their jurisdiction.
3. In addition to the above and even far more importantly, there should be a focus on the strategies for effective implementation of policy through a well co-ordinated national programme that is multi-component in nature and implemented at various levels based on effective partnerships and accountabilities. Thus a consolidation of policy and an elaboration of a RWSS programme strategic framework is recommended as key aspects of the reform process. This programme framework should recognise the distinctiveness of various sub-sector programmes/projects but provide mechanisms for ensuring that they all work in synergy towards achieving national policy objectives and the Millennium Development Goals. It should highlight the role of water and sanitation in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). It should also provide for a strong regulatory and co-ordinating leadership by the relevant government agency at each level of government and the development, operation and sustenance of partnerships between stakeholders. This will ensure that ongoing and future programmes have an appropriate strategic context and are related together and co-ordinated by relevant national and sub-national government agencies.
4. Since the WSS Sector is not clearly represented in the ongoing PRSP process, its role is not well defined in the final draft of the Interim PRSP issued in March 2003 with the full PRSP due to be completed in mid-2004. Thus it is necessary for the WSS sector to link up with the National Forum on the PRSP Process (NFPP).

Thus, it is recommended that, to support the reform process, a National RWSS Steering Committee chaired by the FMWR at an appropriate level and with membership from key federal government agencies, the federal legislature, representative States, development organisations and donor agencies should be established. It's main assignment will be to support the ongoing development/rationalisation of the policy and regulatory instruments, draft the RWSS strategic programme framework document (making use of relevant documents including a draft RWSS programme framework prepared jointly by FMWR and UNICEF) and organising a stakeholders consultative forum to discuss and finalise it

for executive government approval. This framework will then form the main basis for supporting States and LGAs that are willing to pursue RWSS programme delivery in communities in a sustainable way. Thus a primary need of rural dwellers shall be addressed and poverty alleviated.

### Conclusions

Given the current low and declining access to safe water and sanitation and the prevalent water and sanitation related diseases, the underlying causes of which is the poor state of WSS development in the country, there is a need for defining and implementing a clearer reform agenda. WSS sector workers have agreed on the major sector issues and the challenges for the RWSS sub-sector are evident. A vision for decentralised delivery of sustainable RWSS services is required and institutional reforms to realise this vision need to be pursued. A key aspect of the sector reforms is the consolidation of policies, the review of regulatory instruments to reflect the role of communities in the development process in a democratic context and the development of a RWSS programme strategic framework to lend focus to the sub-sector. To facilitate the process, the establishment of a multi-agency National Steering Committee is recommended, its main assignment being to draft the framework and organise a stakeholders consultative workshop to agree on its content and implementation.

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