



Managing water supply and sanitation projects in Nigeria

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Introduction

IN NIGERIA, IT has been estimated that over two thirds of the diseases affecting the people and in particular the under-five age group can be attributed to poor water supply and unsanitary conditions. Apart from high mortality rates caused by water and sanitation diseases, these diseases also account for high morbidity resulting in low productivity, high rate of absenteeism from work, high drop out rates from schools especially among girls and poverty. The Situation Assessment and Analysis conducted by National Planning Commission and UNICEF in 2001 put the infant and under-five mortality rates at 105 and 178 per 1000 live births respectively. Apart from these, it is estimated that over 200,000 deaths occur annually due to water and sanitation related diseases.

The governments especially under the present political dispensation and other donors/international agencies have invested huge resources in the sector without commensurate impact on the lives of the people especially in rural areas. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 1999 estimated that just about half of the 120 million people in the country have access to safe water sources and sanitary means of excreta disposal. While the situation in urban areas could be considered to be fair, the rural areas where more than half of the population resides have been neglected resulting in the present low level of coverage.

Considering the importance of the sector to overall socio-economic development of the people and poverty reduction,

sub-sector which cover; planning, organizing, coordinating and providing effective leadership for sustainable development is observed to be poor.

Review of Management of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme

A critical review of the management of rural water supply and sanitation sector shows that:

- There are no distinct roles and responsibilities among the implementers resulting in duplication of efforts, over concentration of facilities in some areas and waste of scarce resources. All tiers of governments, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and External Support Agencies (ESAs) are involved in all aspects of project management ranging from planning, monitoring, operation and maintenance to direct service delivery.
- There is individualistic approach to project implementation with each agency and tier of governments designing and managing their own project without any reference to each other. Each agency/government adopts management style best suited to achieve its objectives and there is very weak overall coordination of all the projects. From this intervention approach, the moderate achievements made so far could be attributed to the sustained commitments and supports from ESAs such as UNICEF, UNDP, JICA, World Bank, European Commission, DFID, Water Aid and WHO. More could have been achieved if there are concerted efforts in ensuring effective management of the various projects through a well-articulated national rural water and sanitation programme. There is presently no national rural water supply and sanitation programme in the country.
- There is a general awareness among the practitioners on the existence of national water supply and sanitation policy which was published in the year 2000 providing a good starting point for institutional and management reforms. The policy has however not met the expectations of practitioners as it has been considered not to be comprehensive enough to take care of the diverse nature of the sector, which has resulted in low subscription from states and local governments. The policy has in particular not covered effectively issues relating to sanitation development. Generally, the legal framework for effective sector management is weak.

Access to Safe Water and Sanitation				
	Access to Safe Water		Access to Sanitation	
	1995	1999	1995	1999
Urban	79.5%	70.6%	82.1%	75.3%
Rural	39.1%	48%	48.2%	44.4%
Overall	49.9%	54.1%	57.3%	52.8%

Sources: MICS 1995 (FOS/UNICEF, 1995). MICS 1999 (FOS/UNICEF, 1999)

the need for effective and sustainable programme implementation cannot be over-emphasized. This has become more important if the Millennium Development Goal as it relates to water and sanitation is to be achieved.

The focus of this paper is on the management of rural water supply and sanitation sub-sector, which has been identified as one of the major factors contributing to the low-level of access in the country. The management of the

- The planning of rural water supply and sanitation sector is over centralized at the National level without active participation of all other stakeholders.

In summary, the present management arrangement has the following characteristics:

- Centralization with the Federal Ministry of Water resources dictating the pace of development. The bulk of the planning, funding and even implementation are conducted by the ministry without active involvement of other major stakeholders.
- Top-down approach in project management and implementation.
- Supply driven with the providers determining the location of the facilities.
- Ineffective management structure especially at community level resulting in low functionality rates of facilities.

Proposed Management Model

Based on the above findings, continuing working at this rate and adopting the same strategies will not keep up with the growing population that needs WES facilities not to talk of meeting the Millenium Development Goals. Hence the need for management reforms that will ensure sustainable development of the sub-sector.

Taking into consideration the prevailing political, economic and social conditions in the country, a management model is being proposed for the sub-sector that will involve institutional and legal re-organization based on clear roles and responsibilities for each of the actors.

The proposed model is aimed at promoting decentralization with the objectives of ensuring improved service coverage through effective distribution of resources and maintaining clear assignments of responsibilities among the stakeholders, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts. The model will give rise to democratic process of participation and will fully incorporate all the actors including benefiting communities in all aspects of programme implementation.

Considering the large percentage of people yet to have access to safe water supply and adequate sanitation in the country and to reduce government bureaucracy and ensure effectiveness, the proposed model is premised on the establishment of National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency to provide overall sector management. The agency would draw its core staff from all relevant government ministries/agencies.

Similar structure should be established at State, LGA and Community levels. Each State is expected to establish Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency while the LGAs are to have Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department and each community to have WES Committee (Fig. 1). Already most of the States benefiting from UNICEF assisted

programmes have Water Supply and Sanitation Agency and Water and Environmental Sanitation Committee (WESCOM) at Local Government level.

This composition would ensure effective coordination of resources and participation of relevant ministries and agencies who hitherto run parallel projects. There will be harmonization of all the projects thereby minimizing duplication of efforts and waste of resources. The management model would enhance development of consolidated national plan within the framework of national rural water supply and sanitation programme for sustained growth in level of access towards meeting the millennium development goal. The proposed model is best suited for sustained sanitation development considering the present on- coordinated arrangement for implementation.

All external finance assistance from donors should be channelled through the national agency for distribution to specific areas based on regional disparity on level of coverage. External Support Agencies and donors are not expected to implement parallel projects and all support should mainstream into the national programme for effective management.

Conclusion

Considerable amount of resources have been invested in the provision of water and sanitation facilities without commensurate impact on the level of access demonstrating the need for a major reform in the management of RWSS sub-sector in the country. This paper has highlighted some of the major problems militating against effective management of the sub-sector. Taking into consideration the prevailing political, economic and social environments in the country, a management model, is being proposed aimed at promoting decentralization with strong coordination and well-defined roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders. There is need for pragmatic approach to sector reform by involving all the actors towards providing effective water supply and sanitation services.

Effective sector management can only be achieved if there are genuine commitments, good governance and transparency in the overall development. The proposed management model can only be effective if all stakeholders are willing to subscribe to the implementation of National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation programme within the recommended framework.

References

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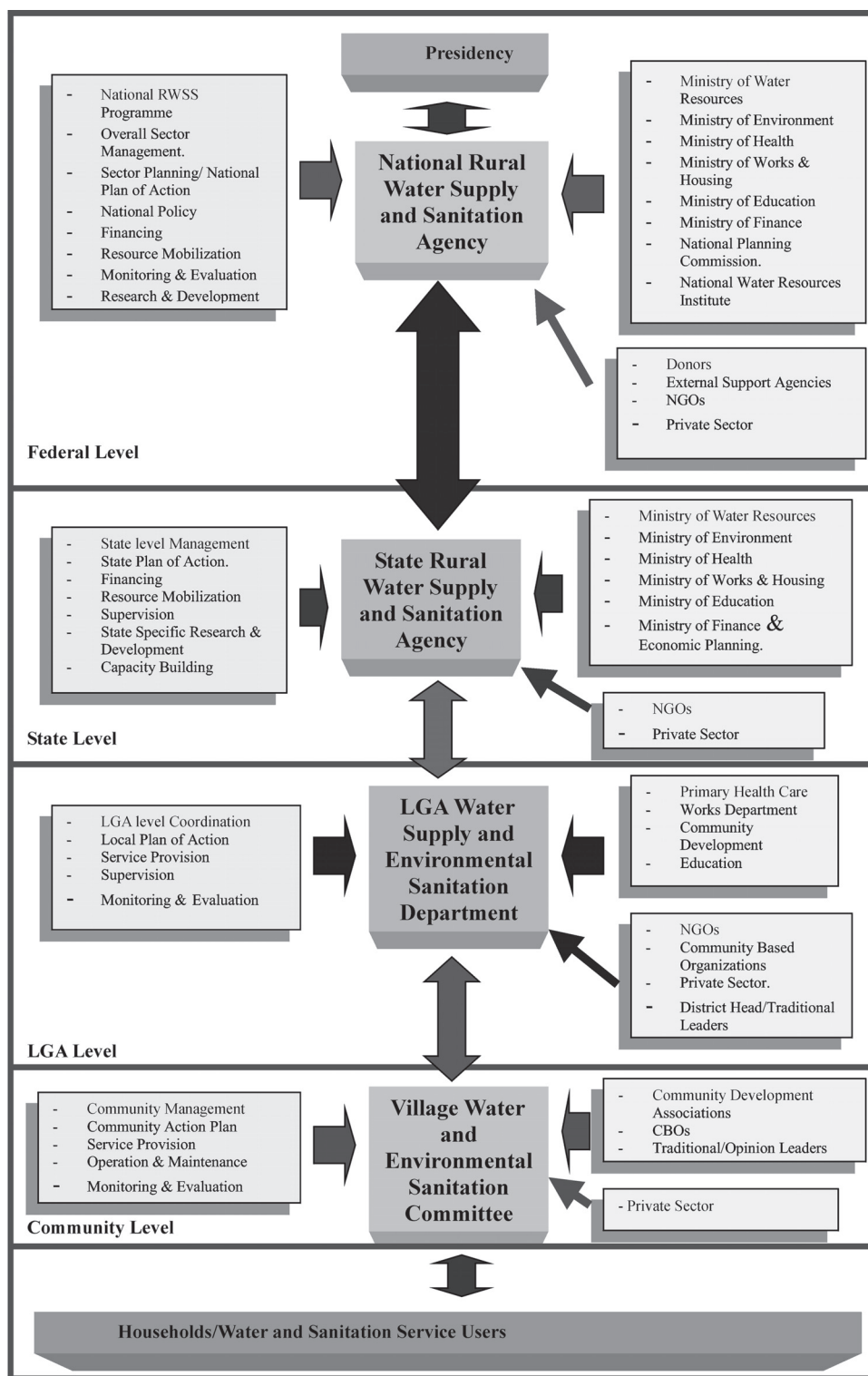


Fig 1. Proposed Management Model for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme.

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