

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS FROM WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

Scaling up the Oju experience in Nigeria – challenges and lessons

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WaterAid Nigeria has demonstrated high level of commitment to ideals of true community management and Demand Responsive Approach in Nigeria. It is currently working with stakeholders in Nigeria, to scale up its experiences from Oju Local Government Council water supply and sanitation project. The scale up is from 4 Local Government Areas in one State to 12 in four States focused on capacity building for State, Local Government, NGOs and CBOs in WES delivery; Facilitating implementation with communities, establishment of effective structures/systems at the local Government and community levels. Some learning points from the Nigeria experience are: Sustainability, Understanding bottlenecks within the context of the environment where it is taking place, Documentation, WES sector stakeholders understanding their roles and fulfilling it. This paper shares WaterAid Nigeria experience in the ongoing scaling up of its community management and demand responsive process in the WASH sector.

Introduction

According to Schouten et al, 2003, the Water and Sanitation sector is confronted with two major Challenges. The first is ensuring that community managed Water and Sanitation systems are sustainable. Secondly, there is the need to increase coverage from the current “islands” of success to larger areas reaching entire populations.

In other words, there is need to “scale up”. This is one sure way by which we can hope to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the number of people without access to safe, sustainable water supply and effective sanitation by 2015.

The WaterAid – UNICEF WES project

In 2004, WaterAid Nigeria and UNICEF signed a Project Partnership Agreement (PCA) to work together in the implementation of the FGN/UNICEF/DFID WES Project, the aim of which is “To facilitate replicable, sustainable, demand responsive WES service delivery in rural areas of 4 DFID partner states”. This involved WaterAid replicating the best practices from the Oju Demand Responsive Community Management Approach.

This paper aims to share the process, challenges and lessons from WaterAid Nigeria’s attempt in scaling up the Oju experience in Nigeria.

Basis for scaling up Oju community management approach

WaterAid Nigeria has, through its work in the country, demonstrated high level of commitment to ideals of true community management and demand responsive approaches

which are the key to sustainability of water supply, sanitation and hygiene projects.

The project memorandum of Nigeria – FGN/UNICEF Water and Environmental Sanitation Project 2002 – 2007 clearly recognized that ‘WaterAid’s evidence-based expertise, particularly in promoting Demand Responsive approaches and engaging with private sector, will offer significant opportunities for cross learning’. This was the basis for the partnership with UNICEF.

Oju community management and demand responsive approach

The Oju Water and Sanitation Project was started in 1996, as an integrated WATSAN programme focusing on Demand Responsive Approach to Service delivery. The Project is situated in Oju Local Government Area (LGA) in Benue State of Nigeria.

WaterAid Nigeria started work in Oju Local Government Council (LGC) in 1996 through the invitation of DFID. During this period, it has supported the development of a sustainable Community Management and Demand Responsive process.

An impact assessment conducted in 2004 (about eight years later) showed that the Community management/DRA processes put in place were still functional and effective through the efforts and commitment of the benefiting communities as the extracts from the report shows (box 1).

The Oju Community Management and Demand Responsive Process incorporate the following features which are foundation of true community management;

- Ownership, Responsibility, Demand and Willingness to pay

Box 1: Taken from Oju Impact assessment report

Conclusion:

“Findings show that the project has reached the poor since 94% of women interviewed knew about the project and have benefited from it. The presence of WASCOM’ members from poor households has been noticed and show the involvement of poor families in decision making process. The project has also succeeded to reach women and to involve them in the project”.

“The project has contributed to significantly increase water service level at an affordable price and together with hygiene awareness campaign to improve the hygiene level of population. However, in some communities results are less significant than in other”.

“Main benefits are related to health improvement and time saved for additional activities. Additional studies are required to measure how far this project has participated in poverty alleviation”.

“Finally, the project has been able to strengthen community unity and has prepared the community to undertake additional work for their own benefit”.

- Community empowerment
- Gender, Equity, Resource and facility Management
- Focused exclusively on Community
- Private sector participation
- Poverty and vulnerable focused
- Community Organization and O&M

Institutional model from oju project

Through the work of WaterAid Nigeria in Oju, an institutional model was set up which over the years has come to be recognized as good practice and is thus forming the basis of replication in the Nigerian WES sector. These structures are itemized below:

- Water and sanitation Management Committee (MC) which manages Water and sanitation at LGA policy level (see fig 1).
- Water and Sanitation Unit (WASU) which provides support to the communities on WES delivery (See fig1).
- Water and Sanitation Committee (WASCOMs) which has responsibility for project implementation and management at community level.
- Church organizations, Health centre etc which are used to communicate hygiene messages.
- Private Sector Participants which are made up of the following;

Replication

About 6 years after, in 2001, the Oju process was replicated in another two LGAs with lessons learned from the models e.g.

- Water and Sanitation Unit Structure and integration within the LGC system.

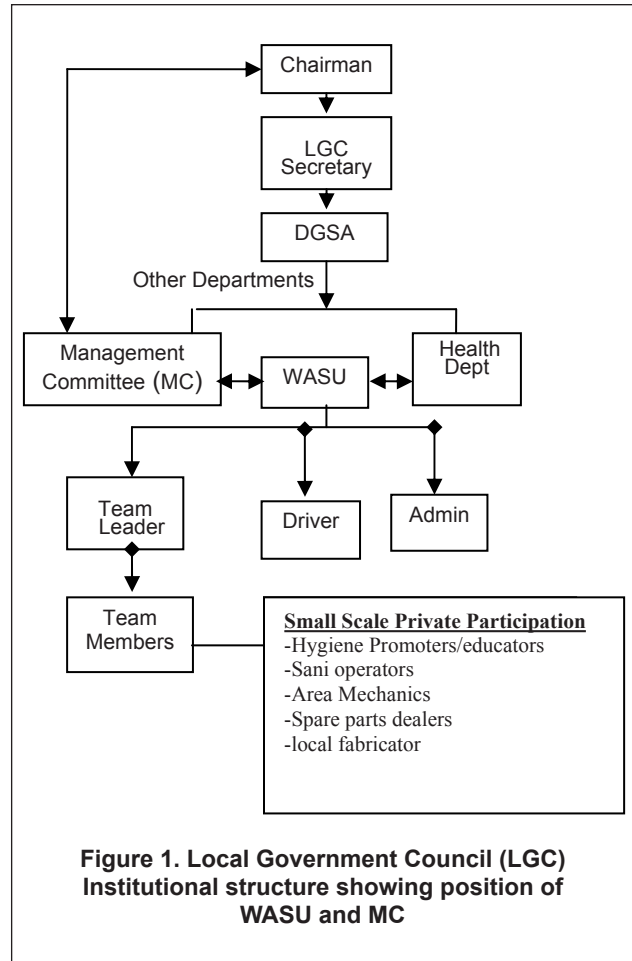


Figure 1. Local Government Council (LGC) Institutional structure showing position of WASU and MC

- Management Committee structure within the LGC systems (MC is made up of community and LGC representatives). The MC chairman, who is an influential member of the community is a signatory to the WES account.
- Small scale private sector participation.

Some improvements were also made in the area of development of self-selection process for Local Government Areas to work in and LGA-wide vulnerability assessment for community ranking and selection. WaterAid also scaled up to 2 other states – Plateau and Bauchi.

Focus of WaterAid scale up

Major focus of the current scale up is in building capacity of Government Organisations and other stakeholders. This is being done through:

- Training Workshops; Mentoring process; Actual implementations with communities; Establishment of effective structures and systems at LGC and community levels e.g. MCs, WASU, WASCOMs, PSP and NGO support.

The models are based on lessons learned from the Oju project and focus on the good practices from the project outlined above.

Scaling up will also take into consideration gender, targeting the vulnerable, well defined community management approaches, hygiene promotion strategies, development of clear community action plans and community monitoring using community determined symbols

Significance of the good practices being replicated

WASU – The National Water and sanitation policy states clearly that responsibility for WES activities in the rural areas is vested upon the LGCs. This will be done through a department responsible for WES. WaterAid through its work in Oju for about 8 years have successfully modeled the institutional structure (including clear and transparent financial, administrative management systems) which are now being adopted by the sector. Oju WASU facilitates WASH delivery in the LGC and currently has facilitated sustainable demand responsive systems in about 63 communities.

Management Committee: Made up of community and LGC representatives. This is a WaterAid creation. The MC over the years has helped to overcome the bureaucracy in the LGC system. It manages the WASU, serves as a board and eye of the LGC on water and sanitation issues and functions as an advocacy instrument for influencing the LGC Management through its non-LGC members. It has become a structure for checking the excesses and political interference of the LGC management on WASH issues. The MCs recently have come together to form a Network for the purpose of influencing policies relating to WASH in rural areas.

Process of scaling up

The scale up through the WaterAid – UNICEF Partnership is being done in four DFID states of Benue, Ekiti, Enugu and Jigawa and followed this process;

- Proposal from WaterAid to UNICEF stating Strategy for the Implementation. Three main areas was identified as follows;
- **Capacity building** (involved strengthening the Local Institutions/organization in this case LGC WASU and State Rural Water and Sanitation Agencies through Workshops/Training, Capital Resource Acquisition, Development of methods/tools, establishment of WES Units and Management Committees).
- **Model project/implementation** (Facilitated State Agencies and LGC WES Units to implement DRA process in 2 communities per LGA fashioned along Oju DRA process)
- **Monitoring and evaluation** (Developed with key stakeholders a comprehensive framework, trained personnel operationlising the M&E plan, monitored and evaluated processes in project implementation)

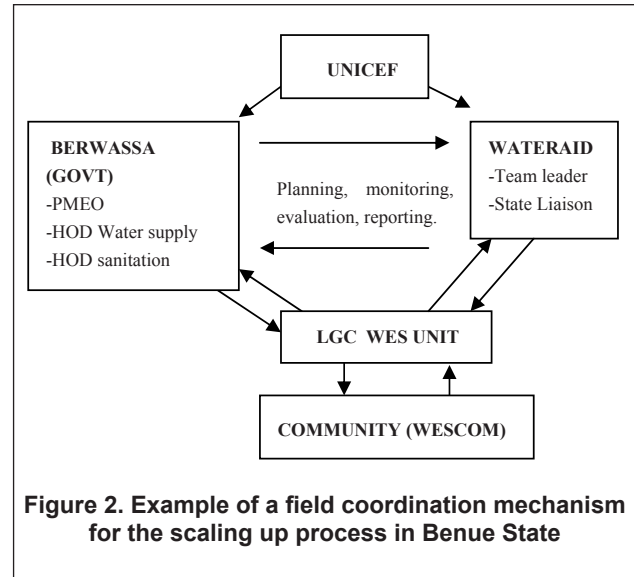


Figure 2. Example of a field coordination mechanism for the scaling up process in Benue State

- Held a National Awareness, Influence and Control Workshop (to agree roles and responsibilities with all stakeholders in the sector).
- Developed a coordination mechanism for field Implementation (see figure 2).
- Supported the 12 LGAs to develop LGA-wide WATSAN plans with target setting for WASH, built their capacity in finance and resource mobilization within the Local Millennium Development Goals Initiative (LMDG-I) This will ensure that capacity for replication is available for LGAs to be able to scale up the good practices to more communities.

Challenges

Human Capital: Need to have policies that can preserve the human resource that will be developed through the models. Indiscriminate transfers of trained staff from WES Units to other departments in other LGC will need to be discouraged.

Attitude and Commitment of Government Institution to the scaling up process: There is need for legislation which will recognize the WES Unit as an integral part of the LGC with its own budget line and dedicated staff. This will ensure that WES activities are budgeted for on an annual basis. While communities have and are continually demonstrating ownership of the projects, Government at all levels are yet to demonstrate ownership of the projects in terms of providing the necessary support required of them. Some State Governments still by-pass systems being set in place to award contracts or provide facilities in communities.

Coordination: How to involve all key stake holders in the programme.

Lessons learnt

- WaterAid has learnt that scaling up the Oju experience is not the ultimate challenge. The challenge is more in the

Stakeholders in the sector (Federal, state, LGCs, NGOs, CBOs etc) understanding their roles and fulfilling them successfully with the right attitude and commitment.

- There must be a working and tested community management model to be scaled up. The Oju process as described above has produced useful lessons which are now being replicated.
- Documentation and learning must form an integral part of the process.
- Capacity building of the staff (governmental agencies, NGOs, donors), CBOs and beneficiaries is a key aspect of the scaling up process.
- Institutional support and partnership with communities.
- Partnership between governmental agencies and external development actors.
- Community experiences and exchanges.

Identified gaps

Though the scaling up process is on course in Nigeria WES sector, there may be the need to concretise it using experience from other countries. One such experience is:

- Setting up a knowledge management and sharing model. This is also referred to as Learning Alliances. This process is currently being piloted by IRC and PLAN in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.
- Action Research which will involve drawing and documenting lessons.
- Weakness in our documentation process

Conclusion

The process of scaling up has commenced in the Nigerian WES sector with the FGN/UNICEF/DFID WES project.

The process is not yet perfect. There is still the need to consolidate the gains from this process through creating learning alliances to ensure sustainability of the scaling up process and thereby produce results that can help achieve the MDGs in Nigeria.

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