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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES**

**Community and small town self-selection process under
sector reform programme in Nigeria**

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The European Union assisted Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Programme (WSSSRP) is being implemented in six focal States of Nigeria. Selection of small towns and communities for intervention is one of major components of the reform programme. The programme ensures that the selection process of small towns and rural communities is free of political interference, transparent, participatory and demand responsive by establishing clear criteria, processes and mechanisms. Cash contribution of 5% to the capital cost is a prerequisite for partnering communities and small towns. Over 850 rural communities and small towns have been selected so far and efforts are underway to replicate and scale up the same in Nigeria. It is believed that the process will result in greater sustainability through increased community ownership and contribution.

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is supporting Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Program (WSSSRP) in Nigeria. The programme is being implemented at both Federal and State levels, and is supported by the Federal Government, State Governments, the EU, UNICEF, Programme Management Unit (PMU) and State Technical Units (STUs). The overall objective of the WSSSRP is to contribute to poverty eradication, sustainable development and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The purpose of the WSSSRP is to increase access to safe, adequate and sustainable water and sanitation services in the six EC focal States of Anambra, Cross River, Jigawa, Kano, Osun and Yobe. The results to be achieved under the WSSSRP are:

- Result 1: Improved water governance at federal level;
- Result 2: Improved water governance at state and LGA levels in the six focal states;
- Result 3: Improved water service delivery in urban areas in the six focal states; and
- Result 4: Water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion services are delivered in a sustainable and integrated manner in up to 1400 rural communities and 60 small towns in 25% of LGAs in the six focal states.

As can be seen above, efforts are being undertaken in six focal States to introduce sector reform and to demonstrate improved service delivery through the reform processes to enable replication and scaling up of the same in other States. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe various aspects of reform programme for which readers are referred to Ahmad et al (2009). This paper focuses only on selection of small towns and rural communities, which is one of the major aspects of the reform programme. The process being adopted for selection of small towns and rural communities for interventions does not only ensure the process to be transparent, participatory, free from political interference, and demand driven but also attempts to ensure sustainability of the WASH services being provided. It is a prerequisite for the participating rural communities and small towns to contribute 5% cash contribution of the capital cost in addition to their

responsibility of operation, maintenance and management of the water and sanitation services. This paper will attempt to share experience from Nigeria on how small towns and rural communities are being self-selected under the programme highlighting the processes and criteria used, major challenges, and lessons learned during the course of implementation.

Rural community and small town self-selection process

The self-selection process of small towns and rural communities follows the completion of Local Government Areas (LGAs) selection. LGAs are the lowest tier of the government in Nigeria. The selection process comprises of carrying out advocacy/ sensitisation meetings for all relevant stakeholders, establishing committees at LGA level, distribution of application form and guidelines to communities, submission of bids, systematic evaluation of bids, and declaring and notifying successful communities. The self-selection process being used for small towns and rural communities are given in the following sections:

Self-selection process for small towns

Selection criteria

The small towns can only be selected to participate in the implementation of the Project unless the following criteria are met (PMU, 2007):

- Its population is between 5,000 and 20,000 (or more). Population less than 5,000 is regarded as rural community.
- It has demonstrated its willingness to own, operate and maintain water supply and sanitation facilities, through the formation of a Water Consumers Association (WCA) as its legal representative.
- It has demonstrated its willingness to pay its cash contributions for the capital costs, O&M and replacement costs of the water supply and sanitation facilities.
- The Project State must have a legal framework which permits the transfer of ownership of water supply and sanitation facilities to WCAs.
- There is a shortage of water and an existing market for water in the town.
- The Project State (or any other agency) has not planned a free water scheme.
- There is a prevalence of any one or more of water related diseases: onchocerciasis (river blindness), filariasis, dracunculiasis (guinea worm), malaria, etc.

Major steps

The selection process involves the following:

1. Organisation of a meeting to explain the selection criteria, the application procedure, the evaluation procedure and the final selection of small towns. This meeting will be attended by representatives from the selected LGAs in the State, relevant Ministries and Agencies, NGOs, CSOs, consumer associations, media and private sector.
2. The application forms will be made available to representatives of the selected LGAs and will be returned by an agreed date.
3. The application forms will be assessed by the members of the evaluation committee. This committee will be formed by the State Ministry of Water Resources and will comprise members of the following institutions:
 - State Authorising Officer
 - State Ministry of LGAs
 - State Ministry of Water Resources
 - LGA WASH coordinator
 - Chairman WASH management committee
 - UNICEF
 - WSSSRP-STU
 - SRIP-STU
 - NGO/CSO in WSSSRP programme area
 - NGO/CSO in SRIP programme area.

4. The members of the evaluation committee may decide to verify the information provided in the application form before finalising the ranking of small towns. In this case, the members of the committee will carry out selected field visits for further evidence or clarification.
5. Organisation of a selection meeting to finalise the ranking of small towns. This meeting will be attended by the members of the evaluation committee. Finally, letters will be written to all participating small towns to inform them of the ranking of small towns and next steps.

Self-selection process for rural communities

The process used for sensitizing, distribution application form and guidelines to the communities are more or less similar to those described above under small town selection process and therefore are not repeated here.(UNICEF, 2007).

| Table 1. Community self-selection criteria (UNICEF, 2007) | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| S/No. | Selection criteria | Max score | comments |
| 1 | Existing and planned water supply (negative) | 50 (30+20) | The greater the existing water supply with respect to the population, the less scored, with 100% coverage scoring reduces to zero. Similarly, the greater the planned water supply, the less scored, with 100% planned coverage scoring becomes zero |
| 2 | Community organization and decision making structure | 10 | The more organized decision making structures within the community are, the more the score they earn |
| 3 | Efforts to address existing WASH problems | 10 | The more the efforts of communities put towards addressing existing WASH problems, the more the score they earn |
| 4 | Understanding of how project can help WASH problems | 3 | The better the understanding of the community on how and ways through which the project can help solve their WASH problems, the more the score they earn |
| 5 | Presence of organized community interest groups | 7 | The more visible and organized community structures and interest groups are, the more the score they earn |
| 6 | Willingness and ability to contribute to project | 10 | The better the willingness and zeal show by the community to contribute with respect to their wealth status, the more the score they earn |
| 7 | Participation in community decision making | 3 | The more the level of participation and inclusion exhibited by the community in decision making processes, the more the score they earn |
| 8 | Procedures for transparency in implementation | 3 | The more open and transparent a community is, in carrying out previous community-based projects, the more score they earn |
| 9 | Accountability for community financial contributions | 4 | The more consistent and transparent the community is in managing finances including adequate reporting, the more the score they earn |
| Total | | 100 | |

Selection criteria

The criteria for self-selection of rural communities (having population less than 5,000) includes existing and planned coverage of water supply, community organization, presence of community interest groups, participatory decision making, transparency, accountability for financial contribution amongst others. Table 1 gives the detail of criteria and numerical score attached to each of the nine verifiable indicators.

Information collected through the application form from the interested rural communities are analyzed to give a quantitative score on each of the above criterion. Guidelines were provided for use by the LGA Management committee to have a common understanding of the ranking for each of the criterion. Following the LGA evaluations, the LGA WASH Units observed the State RUWASSA conducting verification visits in the selected communities.

Opening and evaluation of the community proposals / bids

The proposals (duly completed application forms) are to be returned by the interested communities before the agreed due dates and to be evaluated by members of the LGA Management Committee independently. In order to facilitate evaluation of bids quantitatively against the above criteria, a scoring system was adopted by assigning a maximum score/weight to each of the above elements on a scale of 0-100 points (as given in Table 1 above). Evaluation of the bids was carried out independently by a team of evaluators using anonymous coding for identification of the communities, while the average score for each community was computed based on individual scores awarded by different evaluators. Excel software was used to facilitate data analysis and compilation.

Declaration of results

The results were declared at a stakeholders' meeting attended by LGA Management Committees; LGA Chairman, representatives of communities that submitted proposals; media and other stakeholders. The results were also published with confirmation letters sent to successful communities. The declared results once accepted by all stakeholders led to the identification of the most willing and committed self-selected communities.

Problems encountered and proposed solutions

In some of the States, deadline were found to be short. Therefore, it is proposed to give adequate time (not less than 2 weeks) to communities to properly assess their situation and prepare their reports. Another problem encountered was the inadequate skills of some of the communities in completing proposals despite the guidelines provided to them. To overcome this, it is suggested that proper orientation should be conducted for the interested communities on how to prepare their proposals/bids. The capacity issue was also found to be true, in some instances, in the case of the evaluation team. Adequate training is required on evaluation of bids/proposal particularly for those who have inadequate experience in WASH sector. In addition, the background and experience of the candidates also need to be taken into account while selecting members of the evaluation team. Evaluation of the bids was found to be a cumbersome job particularly for those members coming from other LGAs. To overcome this, it is proposed to give special monetary incentives to those members of evaluation team who sacrificed their routine business. Secondly with an increasing number of bids to be evaluated, the duration of evaluation should also be increased from the existing three days.

Conclusions

Over 850 rural communities and small towns were selected using the reformed process. The self-selection process was found to be not only critical step in ensuring demand responsive approach but also making the whole process transparent and free from political and other influences. The process also revealed that communities understand their problems better than external professionals. The process needs to be replicated and scaled up in Nigeria by all stakeholders. However, it is encouraging to point out that similar process is already being used for selection of communities under the DFID assisted program. The scaling up/replication of the process may require orientation or short trainings for the Stakeholders.

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Note

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the government/organizations they work for.

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sector reform, community, small town, selection process, demand driven approach.

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