

Scaling up Support to Water Supply & Sanitation in Ethiopia

The sight of a young girl walking under the weight of a heavy water jerry can is an all too commonplace occurrence in Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world. Ethiopia lags far behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and suffers from one of the lowest water and sanitation (WSS) coverage rates of any country in the world. Only 6% of Ethiopia's 71 million population has access to improved sanitation and 22% to improved water supply.

Over the years, the World Bank has been working with the Government of Ethiopia to improve access to WSS services. The World Bank's analytical work—such as four issues papers on i) affordable project design of WSS systems, ii) selecting and implementing management models, iii) improving the supply of materials and services, and iv) integrating sanitation planning and hygiene education with water supply system development, and a water chapter in the 2003 Ethiopia Public Expenditure Review—have helped guide sector reforms and integrate WSS into government planning. The World Bank has also financed infrastructure facilities through a series of lending operations. From 1996 to 2003, the Water Supply Development and Rehabilitation (WSDR) Project piloted decentralized approaches for sustainable water supply services in a number of towns and rural communities.

WORLD BANK SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROGRAM

In 2004, the World Bank launched the *Ethiopia Water Supply and Sanitation Project*, which builds on earlier projects and scales up World Bank involvement in town and rural WSS. The project provides support to the Government of Ethiopia's new *National Water Supply and Sanitation Program*. The Program recognizes that increasing access to sustainable WSS services depends on more than just the construction of new facilities, which is why its

emphasis is on developing institutional capacity at all levels.

The Ethiopia Water Supply and Sanitation Project specifically involves a US\$ 75m IDA credit and US\$ 25m IDA grant to provide roughly 5,500 rural water supply schemes serving 2 million people, and about 75 town water supplies serving 1 million people.

THE "STEPED-APPROACH"

The National Water Supply and Sanitation Program incorporates a demand-driven, performance-based approach for allocating assistance. Towns and rural communities receive access to financial and technical resources in steps, and must meet certain targets before moving from one step to the next. The approach ensures that the government's limited resources are only targeted to towns and rural communities who are capable and committed to improving their WSS systems.

The stepped-approach varies slightly for urban and rural WSS. The urban component of the Program is helping towns establish Water Boards and improve the capacity of their local utility operators. The rural component is providing financial assistance to woredas (rural districts) to help communities establish WSS committees (WASHCOMs) and build facilities. WASHCOMs represent the communities in planning and managing their WSS facilities.

Example of the Stepped Approach



ETHIOPIA AT A GLANCE

Population: 71 million; 20% Urban, 80% Rural;
2.4% annual growth rate
Surface area: 1.1 million km²
Life expectancy: 42 years
GDP per capita: US\$ 100

Human Development Index ranking:
170 out of 177 countries
% below the basic needs poverty line: 44%
% with improved water access: 22%
% with improved sanitation access: 6%

In order to reach the MDGs:
who need access to water: 44 million
who need access to sanitation: 47 million

LISTENING TO COMMUNITIES

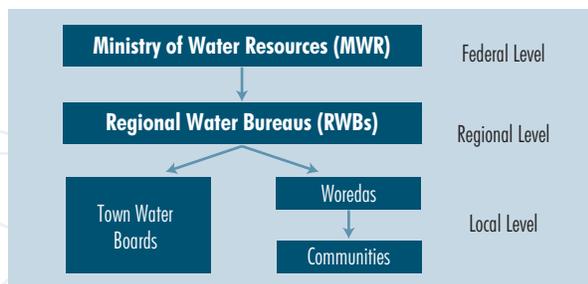
The program’s emphasis on local government decision making reflects an overall government shift of responsibilities and resources to the lowest possible level. It contrasts markedly with the former centralized supply-driven approach whereby the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) identified, financed and implemented WSS projects for towns and rural communities. Under the new Program, the MWR and the Regional Water Bureaus (RWBs) re-focus on facilitation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, while towns, woredas and communities plan and implement the Program.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building is essential in this decentralized approach. Years of central government decision making have left most local and regional entities without the capacity to identify and implement changes needed in their WSS systems, even though they are the ones best positioned to understand their communities’ needs.

How exactly however, is all this capacity being developed? In order to build it, the program is relying on a system of international, national and regional sector professionals working with one another to develop capacity across all levels and among all stakeholders—from the Ministry down through to participating communities and local artisans.

International consultants are working with the MWR to train a group of national consultants, who are working with the RWBs to train a much larger group of regionally-based sector professionals. These regional consultant teams are each responsible for assisting several Town Water Boards and woredas with preparing and implementing their WSS programs through each phase of the stepped-approach.



The regional consultancy teams also train local WASHCOMs and artisans who will be working with rural communities to operate and manage their own WSS facilities. The layered structure maximizes the number of sector professionals at every level who can be trained in a short period of time to speed up the expansion of WSS access. Over time, the fledgling consultant groups will develop into private sector organizations that can support operations of town and rural WSS facilities on a professional basis.

WORK IN PROGRESS

World Bank support to the implementation of the National Water Supply and Sanitation Program began in the fall of 2004 and is still in its early stages. International, national, and regional specialists have been contracted and trained. The RWBs have selected the first group of woredas and towns to participate in the Program. These towns and woredas are now implementing Step 1. Woredas are equipping and training their RWSS teams, while towns are establishing or reinforcing their Town Water Boards. Towns and woredas are assessing their needs and planning how to meet them. In the coming months, woreda Water Supply and Sanitation and Hygiene Plans will be prepared and rural communities will be establishing WASHCOMs. At the same time, the first towns will be moving to Step 2 and begin making immediate service improvements.

The National Water Supply and Sanitation Program is altering the way the WSS business is conducted in Ethiopia. The Program sustainably improves WSS access by focusing on capacity building at all levels and allocates limited government resources to where they will have the greatest impact.

The Program demonstrates the Government’s commitment and provides a roadmap for scaling up WSS access at an increased pace. The challenge now lies with the donor community, which has a history of piece meal support to the WSS sector. Some donors have already expressed an interest in channeling their funding through the National Water Supply and Sanitation Program, and should be encouraged. Only with increased and more coordinated aid can Ethiopia achieve the WSS MDGs.

RELEVANT PROJECT

Ethiopia Water Supply & Sanitation Project

Project ID P076735

