



Information Note

Regional Water and Sanitation Group

West Africa

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National Sanitation Policy for Benin

Translation of the original French Information Note: "La politique nationale de l'Assainissement au Bénin".

Access to drinking water and adequate sanitation is a necessary condition for good health, for an acceptable quality of life, for economic development and for environmental conservation. However, a large segment of the population in Benin -- notably low-income groups in suburban and rural areas -- does not have access to the most basic services. What is even more serious is that the coverage rate in urban sanitation has even decreased over the last few years. The economic, social and environmental consequences are, to say the least, alarming. The previous conception of development of the sanitation sector, based on improving the coverage rate, has arrived at a dead end. It appears that, using this approach, the objective of access to clean drinking water and sanitation for all by the year 2000 is a goal which is out of reach.

New approaches must be tried out in order to meet this challenge. The concept of need must be replaced by that of demand for services by the population. Environmental constraints such as water resources and quality management as well as general improvements in living conditions of the population can no longer be ignored.

Establishing a realistic frame of reference, based on an in-depth and objective analysis of the general situation and including institutional, financial and technical recommendations, represents the necessary starting point for a comprehensive reform of the sanitation sector. The national development policy for the sector in Benin constitutes an effective tool for managing services that are sustainable, demand-driven, financially accessible and environmentally sound.

Context

It became necessary to establish a new framework for general policy in the area of sanitation when progressive deterioration of the environment and sanitation conditions became evident. In Benin, many examples of pollution, especially in urban areas, are caused by poor management of excreta disposal services, inadequate drainage, as well as inadequate disposal of solid and industrial wastes. In Cotonou, for example, the water table is constantly polluted by floods, dumping of wastes into swamps and dumping of sludge from

latrine pits. The environmental action plan has established a set of recommendations for fighting pollution. Insufficient drainage leads to the formation of stagnant pools which can become breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Poor excreta disposal causes pollution of

ground water sources and increased transmission of diseases related to the fecal-oral cycle, such as diarrhea, dysentery, hookworm, schistosomiasis and other parasites.

The institutions concerned, i.e. the ministries responsible for sanitation (first of all, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Urbanization) have limited resources and a list of rules and regulations which is not adapted to effectively managing the development of this sub-sector. In addition,

	1980	1988
Drinking water in urban areas	26 %	66 %
Drinking water in rural areas	15 %	46 %
Sanitation in urban areas	48 %	42 %
Sanitation in rural areas	4 %	31 %

Source : World Resources 1992-1993, The World Resources Institute

certain departments have overlapping or poorly defined responsibilities.

However, Benin has a certain number of advantages which allow us to be optimistic about the development of sanitation, in both rural and urban situations: In recent years, the country has been applying a policy of structural reform

and economic renewal, based on a process of democratization, decentralization and structural adjustment. National leaders are increasingly concerned about the deterioration of urban services available to the population and its impact on the environment and the quality of life, in particular for low-income groups. In-

creasing attention is being paid to developing the national private sector. These elements create a favorable context for progressive and sustainable improvements in sanitation, health and the living conditions of the population of Benin.

Principles of the National Sanitation Policy

The sanitation policy must be seen within the context of the decentralization of responsibilities and collaboration between public and private agencies and users. Communities must participate in making decisions about their environment, and the national private sector must play an active role in supplying sanitation services. The state's capacities in the areas of planning, regulation, coordination and monitoring of services need to be reinforced. Benin's national strategy in the area of sanitation is based on five fundamental principles:

- setting up sustainable and effective institutional structures for managing services;
- promotion of sanitation programs which have been developed based on the demand expressed by the communities;

- community participation in financing installations, and in their operation and maintenance;
- developing the skills of local artisans and entrepreneurs;
- promotion of appropriate technologies corresponding to the financial and managerial capacities of the state, cities and the beneficiaries.

Applying these principles should lead to:

- reinforcing the state in its role of promoter and coordinator of sanitation programs, with the primary responsibility of the defining policy and standards in the area of sanitation;
- offering cities the possibility to plan and manage urban sanitation services;
- reinforcing the role of the private sector and NGO's in community

support and the supplying of services;

- reinforcing the skills and capacities of the various agencies involved in order to allow them to effectively carry out the roles and responsibilities which they are assigned by proposing stimulating activities and high-quality training.

The various components of sanitation which are covered by the national policy are the following: *disposal of excreta, sludge from latrine pits and waste water, management of solid household waste, industrial and toxic waste, and storm water drainage and flood control.* These components were considered separately as well as integrally. Needs also vary according to the environment, whether rural, semi-urban or urban, and these differences were also taken into account in the organization of sanitation services.

Recommendations of the National Sanitation Policy

Institutional recommendations

The Sanitation policy is based on clearly defining the responsibilities of public agencies, private companies and beneficiaries in the development, financing, construction, management and maintenance of sanitary infrastructures. This strategy must be applied according to the principle of decentralization and assigns actual responsibilities to users, associating jurisdiction and competence, and ensures continuity of services. This process will be accompanied by training sessions, community mobilization, and support for the interested parties, and will facilitate the progressive financial transfer of responsibility for operations to users and the local communities.

The national sanitation policy proposes a clear assigning of tasks and responsibilities among the institutions involved at all levels, because the current sharing

of roles in the area of sanitation and the lack of precision in defining these roles constitute a serious stumbling block to the effective delivery of the services.

Technological recommendations

Principles related to technological options for sanitation services are the following:

- emphasize on-site and decentralized systems, which are inexpensive and easy to maintain,
- consider the entire process from production of waste to its treatment in a way which respects the environment (waste collection, transporting, treatment, storage or recycling).

The national sanitation policy sets forth detailed recommendations for the development of the following components:

- Wastewater disposal (on-site and collective sanitation, in schools and public places)
- Excreta disposal, emptying of septic tanks and latrine pits
- Household solid waste
- Storm water drainage and flood control
- Special, industrial and toxic waste

Financing and cost recovery

Medium and long-term strategy for financing sanitation is based on the following principles:

- adaptation of the level of urban services to the actual resources of the beneficiaries;
- maximum decentralization of urban services in order to allow for participation in decision-making and

cost recovery by direct payment made by the beneficiaries;

- billing of public services for the actual cost of the services which they receive;
- financing of services which cannot be decentralized or which are directly covered by budgets of the state, the city or the communes, according to the zone covered by the infrastructure or service in question.

Problems which the government usually faces in financing investments and coverage of recurring costs will continue to exist if no change of policy is put into effect. Both rural and urban populations will be encouraged to pay in total, either directly or indirectly (through taxation), for the recurring costs (operation and maintenance) for the services which they receive.

A policy of accountability and transparency in financial management should be applied in order to obtain popular support for the National Sanitation Program. This means that the sum received by the government earmarked for operation of urban services must in reality be paid out to the communes and used to cover the cost of construction and services of a public interest. The national sanitation program includes the carrying out of an institutional and financial study in order to specify management and cost recovery solutions for the various types of sanitation.

Human Resource Development

Implementation of the national sanitation program will develop new skills at all levels, calling for an increase in knowledge by means of training, sensitization and information.

The goal of the training program is to improve (through developing human resources) the effectiveness of the various actors in sanitation in three key areas:

- concrete implementation of the national sanitation program;
- increasing knowledge in all technical areas, and in program and project design (planning, identification, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) within a participatory framework;
- improving the exchange of information and communication among various levels of intervention as a way of reinforcing the policy of decentralization.

The Ministries of the Environment and Health will be responsible for organizing and coordinating activities, and for managing and monitoring the training plan.

Promotion of Information on Hygiene and Health

Activities for promoting and publicizing the national sanitation program will be integrated into the various components

of this program. Their objectives will be as follows:

- to develop the communities' responsibilities for improving their environment;
- to promote both individual and collective behavior changes in the areas of hygiene and habitat, and in schools;
- to support on-going sanitation programs through communication programs (which will take into account the target groups).

In schools, the hygiene education and promotion of sanitation program developed by the government will be evaluated, modified if necessary, and expanded to all schools in the country. In order to carry out this program, training for teachers, health personnel and hygiene staff will be reinforced. A participatory approach as well as marketing of on-site sanitation and hygiene practices for individuals, households and at the neighborhood level will be implemented within the framework of the national sanitation program. Environmental sanitation will be included in the training program for sector staff and will also be taught in schools.

Implementation of the National Sanitation Program

The strategy for implementing the national sanitation plan (NSP) will be based on planning carried out in the cities and rural areas covered by the program and will include detailed study and implementation of projects aimed at improving the urban and rural environment. Communities will be encouraged to develop their own projects, with the assistance of NGO's. This is aimed at improving their living conditions by means of local initiatives. Support for the reorganization of national and municipal services involved in sanitation and human resource development will be undertaken in

order to establish the supervision necessary for the effective implementation of the national sanitation plan.

The implementation strategy of the plan consists in testing the feasibility of the

recommendations of the national sanitation policy via demonstration projects (pilot projects), including a process of monitoring, evaluation and documentation before proceeding to replicate or extend them to other neighborhoods or cities. This methodology has several objectives:

- to test the feasibility of technical, institutional and financial options of the national sanitation policy and to adjust the policy according to the lessons learned during implementation of pilot projects;

Category of activity of the NSP	Amount	
	millions CFAF	thousands US\$
Complementary studies for implementation of the NSP	1 115	2 230
Demonstration and pilot projects	595	1 190
Institutional strengthening	625	1 250
Priority investments	11 578	23 155
Total amount of the NSP	13 913	27 825

- to determine the viability of strategic options regarding the role to be played by communities in identifying priorities, planning of improvements in living conditions, financing, and management and maintenance of collective sanitation facilities;
- to examine the rationale of institutional recommendations, in particular those defining the roles and functions of the various actors involved in the implementation of national policy (national and commu-

nal sanitation committees, ministerial planning units, technical municipal units, private companies and artisans, neighborhood and users' committees, NGO's, etc.).

The strategy for implementation of the NSP is based on two principles: start small with a clearly defined policy for the development of the sector and stimulate demand.

The NSP will require reasonable funding, which will amount to about 14 billion CFAF (\$28 million US). Spread out

over a five-year period, the annual cost of the program (3.4 billion CFAF or \$5.6 million US) thus seems completely reasonable, taken into consideration the expected outcome of the implementation of the national sanitation policy.

However, as the government has a great number of priorities for public investments and only limited revenue, the support of funding agencies is necessary for the successful implementation of the national sanitation program.

Conclusion

Improving sanitation and protecting the environment require an integrated and unified approach. Integrated because one must take into account all actions aimed at improving the population's living conditions and their interactions with the environment: treatment and disposal of wastewater, management of household waste, industrial and toxic wastes, storm water drainage and flood control, and from all perspectives -- institutional, financial and technical. Unified, because this involves various departments of both central and local administrative services, private companies which supply services, and the communities as beneficiaries, who must be considered as full-fledged partners at all levels of decision-making.

The development of the national sanitation policy has been based on this double concept of integration and collaboration. It is perfectly applicable to the diverse initiatives now being implemented (the environmental action plan, the program to reinforce urban management, etc.) and has been discussed and debated by most of the partners and agencies concerned. The recommendations of the national policy were discussed and approved on September 15, 1994 during a national seminar attended by more than 80 representatives of the administration, the private sector, NGO's, and development institutions. This collaboration resulted in enriching the recommendations of the national policy and in facilitating the subsequent integration and application of its principles by the leaders who will apply the policy.

The National Sanitation Policy of Benin was developed with the assistance of the Regional Water and Sanitation Group for West Africa, part of the joint UNDP-World Bank Program for Water and Sanitation

If you would like to know more about the sanitation program in Benin or the UNDP-World Bank Program, or to comment on the program, please contact:

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