



Interview of the Ivorian Minister for economic infrastructure: «Rural communities are marginalised»



The Ivorian government expects a lot from the 7th RWSN going on this week in Abidjan. These expectations include solutions from participants to address rural water supply issues. The minister, Mr Patrick Achi- Ivorian minister for economic infrastructures talks about the key challenges of African countries, particularly the need of political if we are to meet universal access by 2030.

Your government has significantly contributed to the great success of this Forum held for the first time in a French speaking country. What are your expectations?

The speakers have said it all already: on average, water coverage in my country is around 80% with huge disparities depending on areas. For instance, rural communities are marginalised and their access to water is a challenge. As stated by the PM, following the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, half of the rural communities had no access to water as a result of the high breakdown rate of facilities. Despite the huge efforts, 30% of these facilities are in a

broken state. You certainly understand the critical issues this poses and which we are working hard to address. My government invests on pumps which need maintenance. In principle, the management committees have the onus of collecting money/fees from water users to support repairs. Unfortunately, the reality is different on the ground. The government cannot afford the repair costs of the entire country and communities themselves can't do it as they lack means. In attending a meeting like RWSN, we expect to hear experiences of Asia and Latin America countries facing similar challenges. In other words, we want to learn from others' experience to help us address our water issues.

Besides the O&M issue, what other challenges do you face in rural water supply?

All issues and concerns are relevant but first and foremost, note that the hand pump we use is a simple technology. It is unthinkable that in this modern world in 2016 our countries don't have companies able to manu-

facture spare parts which they can assemble and dismantle. It is essential to make spare parts available. We also have leasing experience but the repairers need spare parts to do their jobs. The issue is that repairers cannot afford to pre fund spare parts and cannot import them overnight. So the solution is to have local units which produce these parts. The government has to encourage and organise these units to raise funds for these operators.

The second challenge relates to training because even with simple technology options, there are issues like place of manufacture and handling/management by communities. So monitoring is required. Community members go about their many daily activities and as long as these pumps operate, nobody cares. It is as if these facilities will not even break down and when this happens, well, they become powerless. The national water utility tried to contract with operators to provide services in rural areas but this has faced some challenges. One of these is the distance management. Monitoring from Abidjan is not effective. Now the

question is 'should we hand it over to local governments which are closer to communities?' If that is the option, we need to allocate budget for monitoring. Discussions are currently ongoing around this. Also, we should ensure that the operators generate incomes from their business while ensuring affordability of water to our communities who may challenge high costs. On the other hand, operators may give up their activities if the cost is too low.

Are you hopeful that by 2030, African countries will achieve universal access to water for rural communities as set in the SDGs?

To me, we generally focus on funding only. But from experience, we realize that financing is not the problem. The real issue is the political will: we need a strong commitment from the government to prioritize this and ensure awareness of all sector stakeholders. This engagement must be at all levels: central and local governments, community chiefs, women groups because no effective implementation can happen without relevant bodies and or people.

The second requirement is to prepare eligible projects ready to be funded because some donors are willing to support us sometimes, eligible projects seem to be the missing link. Developing these projects require preparation and consultation efforts.

Finally, besides ensuring shared political will, the government must supervise and follow up implementation of identified solutions. If these factors are met, I am hopeful that in 15 years, we can take up this challenge of universal access.

By Alain TOSSOUNON

WATER FINANCING: Only countries with professional rural water projects will benefit from AfDB



By Isaiah Esipisu

African governments will be forced to come up with rural based water and sanitation projects with clear infrastructure for management and maintenance, if they have to benefit from the African Development Bank's kitty for rural water supply.

Speaking at the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) forum in Abidjan, Sering Jallow of the African Development Bank expressed concerns that many leaders in African countries usually prioritise projects that are politically beneficial, thus, ignoring important projects that would benefit people on the ground.

"Countries always come with proposals for urban water and

sanitation projects because such projects are more visible, hence, politically rewarding," he told the water and sanitation forum.

The bank runs a project known as Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI), which supports rural water and sanitation projects and programs with funding for investment operations, strengthening of sector processes and systems, as well as through advocacy and knowledge building.

According to the latest report, the Bank among other development partners disbursed a total of 35.5 million Euros through RWSSI to support water and sanitation projects in Uganda, Sudan, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone by 2015.

However, the bank now insists on projects that can be sustained for a longer period.

"There is need for policies, but also, there is need for adequate capacity for implementation and management with involvement of rural communities and the private sector," said Jallow.

He pointed out that poor management of water and water resources especially in rural areas often leads to fragility. And such fragilities, he said, are always an impediment to development. "There is clear evidence that countries that had conflicts did not achieve the millennium development goals," he told the water and sanitation forum.

Alexander Bakalian, World Bank Sector Manager for Urban

Development and Services in the Africa Region pointed out that there was need to professionalise water access services in rural communities.

He observed that many governments prefer investing in urban areas where there are many engineers, but are reluctant to take similar investments to rural areas fearing lack of expertise.

"We need to understand that poor people live in rural areas. So if we have to address poverty, we must focus on rural communities," he said.

The RWSN forum brings together over 500 people from different sectors to share ideas, learn from each other's experiences so as to make water available to all, at least by 2030.

A new guide to water and sanitation rights to be launched in Abidjan

By Isaiah Esipisu

WaterAid, an international humanitarian nongovernmental organisation in collaboration with UNICEF and other NGOs will on Friday 2nd 2016 launch a new guideline that will help local people in developing countries realise their right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

According to Louisa Gosling, the Quality Programmes Manager at WaterAid, access to water and sanitation is already a recognised as a basic human right by the United Nations, meaning that governments around the world are duty-bound to reach everyone with

these life essentials. “But that is not enough,” she said at the ongoing Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) forum in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

“We must provide guidance on what that means in practice – at the national level for government commitments, for communities to show what they are entitled to, and to those in local governments on what it means for their everyday work,” said Gosling ahead of the launch, to be held on the sidelines of the water and sanitation conference.

On 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution A/RES/64/292 de-

clared safe and clean drinking water and sanitation a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.

Other organisations involved in developing these guidelines include the WASH United, the Institute for Sustainable Futures, End Water Poverty, and the Rural Water Supply Network.

Hannah Neumeyer, the Head of Human Rights at WASH United points out that there is always a challenge with human rights when it comes to government administration. “They [human rights] are legally binding, but to local governments, they are

at best [perceived as] an abstract concept without practical value,” she said.

“It was in that regard that we took time to understand why local government officials are often hesitant about human rights, and what they consider important,” said Neumeyer.

As a result, the guideline document explains the rights in a very simple language without using jargons.

The guide is designed to inspire and guide local heroes in government and the community so that clean water and sanitation become reality for everyone.

The ‘Making Rights Real’ project has been made possible with financial support from Players of People’s Postcode Lottery.



Two innovative and attractive technologies called BluePump and LifePump

To address existing issues in the well-known and widespread hand pumps, researchers have successfully tested some solutions. The 7th RWSN has presented two new pump technologies which carry several advantages.

Hand pumps sold and used in several countries have limits; in some regions over the past years, India Mark II, Afridev and others have shown limits including, corrosion with high PH against standards. This has huge impacts such as loss of investments. This issue solved through the use of plastic materials but only for boreholes depth of which does not exceed 45m.

But research advancement has brought change. Indeed, the water stakeholders have all reasons to get excited with the evaluation outcomes of the BluePump designed by Fairwater Foundation and shared by Tim Foster from Sydney University. Tested in 11 African countries, BluePump with PVC pipe stands as a response to

the challenge of corrosion. Indeed, out of the 142 inspected pumps, the comparative study has shown that 72 have better technical results. The findings published this week show particularly that the BluePump records the highest functionality rate with 67% against 67% for India Mark II. 97% is the satisfaction level of communities who acknowledged that the technology is user friendly. These findings therefore show BluePump as a «robust» technology as well as LifePump which has been released three years ago.

LifePump is an innovative technology which used in facilities over 100m deep. Its other good advantages are acceptability, capacity and sustainability. This research commissioned by World Vision in Malawi has delivered positive results. At the end of the process, the freelance evaluators concluded that LifePump shows no signs of wear after 30 months of daily use!

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