

Water and Sanitation for the Poor

Lessons to learn and practices to replicate for capacity building in Water supply and sanitation (WSS) services provision for the low-income urban areas: WUP Project #5

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Program

West and Central
Africa Region

The environmental situation in low-income urban areas in Africa, as well as in other continents, is distressing to say the least. Populations are confronted daily with problems of overcrowding, non-existent or unreliable sanitary services and ad hoc access to water supply. Nevertheless, makeshift solutions do exist. The populations in these areas have had to become self-reliant in acquiring the minimum services necessary. Thus, small-scale (often local) providers have emerged to satisfy the demand of these populations for water supply and to a lesser extent sanitation services. Prices for these Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) services are often higher than for example, what the main domestic water utilities charge. But then again, these utilities rarely provide any services in these areas, so consumers have little or no choice. These micro-enterprises should not be ignored, nor should community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations which are providing Health & Hygiene Education (HHE). All of them are furnishing essential services that governments are unable or unwilling to provide. The issue now is how to improve the quality, access and affordability of these services as to transform them into reliable options for WSS and HHE.

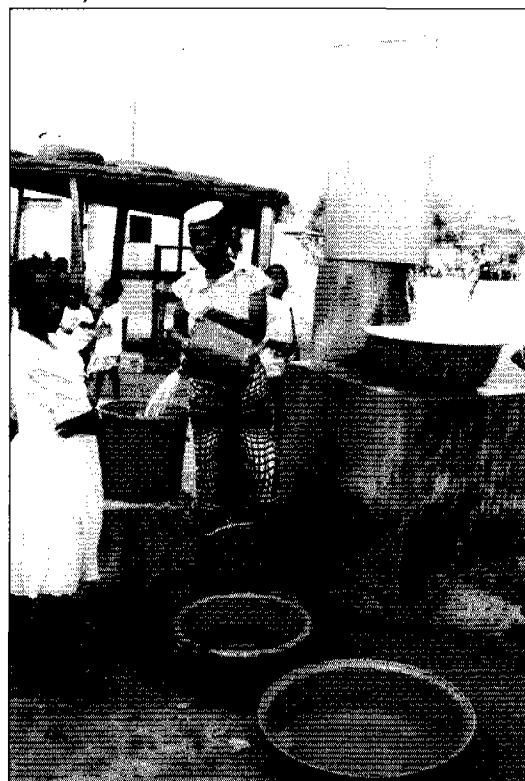
This is the objective of the Water Utility Partnership Program (WUP) project number 5. Solutions are sought in the form of partnerships, whereby the water utilities work in collaboration with these other (informal) service providers to provide sustainable WSS services and HHE in low-income urban areas. This Field note gives a glimpse of this Pan African activity with a focus on the West African pilot phase.

The Water Utility Partnership Program (WUP) Project #5

The WUP is an African program which brings

together three partners: UADE¹, CREPA² and TREND³.

The WUP has as its overall objective to increase the coverage of WSS services and to improve the quality of these services through increased investments and the reform of utilities.



For this purpose, the WUP aims to bring together all the actors that operate in the sector in Africa. The WUP has several projects planned or ongoing and the project N° 5 is particularly concerned with improving the access to, and affordability of WSS & HHE for populations in low-income urban areas.

1. Union Africaine des Distributeurs d'Eau.
2. Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût.
3. Training Research and Networking for Development

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The project N° 5* aims to focus on the replicability and going to scale of WSS & HHE practices which have been observed in low-income urban communities, and which have proven successful (to a certain degree) in improving access to these services. The objective is to carry out in-depth case studies on these particular 'best practices', as to be able to extract lessons and unveil the conditions that are necessary to replicate these practices elsewhere.

From these case studies a set of guidelines will be elaborated, including experiences from other regions, and will be used as a tool for replicating and upgrading the 'best practices'.

The selection of practices is carried out during a workshop which is held in each of the participating countries (10 countries in all are expected to participate; five in each region). All the actors that play a role in providing WSS & HHE in low-income areas in these countries are invited to participate, to share their experience and give their opinion on which practices seem worthwhile examining closer. It is essential that the main domestic water utilities play a key role during these workshops as the aim is for the main provider of WSS services to become involved in low-income communities, through the collaboration with local 'informal' providers.

Two workshops: the East & West Africa pilot cases

Prior to launching the case studies on these 'best practices' in the participating countries, two initial workshops have been held as a pilot phase for each region. The first workshop for the project was launched in Siavonga, Zambia, where the framework and methodology (developed by IRC⁴) for the case studies were presented to the participants, and the discussions held led to the fine-tuning of the framework and methodology until it was accepted by the participants. A similar process was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for West Africa.

The West African workshop united a variety of key actors⁵ in the sector from water vendors in low-income areas of Abidjan to high-ranking representatives of the national water utility: SODECI. Together, with the support of resource people from the RWSGs in East and West Africa, the WUP, CREPA, TREND and the IRC, the participants went through a process of problem identification in the sector. This was followed by a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis exercise on the main service providers in these low-income urban areas. Also included in this workshop was a field visit to some key locations in low-income areas in Abidjan as to witness specific practices which are considered to be commonplace. The workshop was designed to have a capacity-building impact for the participants who were going through this process of problem identification and analysis together.

*"Strengthening Capacity of Water Utilities to deliver Water Supply and Sanitation Services, Environmental Health and Hygiene Education to Low-Income Urban Communities"

4. International Reference Centre for Water & Sanitation

5. SODECI (National water utility, Direction de l'Eau (DE), Ministry of urban planning, Ministry of housing, NGO's, Water Vendors & Responsibles for Water standposts

Once all participants were at the same level of understanding, practices selection for the case studies was carried out. A voting system whereby each participant selected their four priority practices led to the identification of the key practices.

The four 'best' practices for Côte d'Ivoire

It has to be noted that the practices that are selected are not necessarily to be qualified as 'perfect'. Indeed, the importance here is to carry out case studies on those practices which are in place, for which there is a demand, and which are promising with respect to results achieved and possibility for replication.

The participants in the workshop identified the following practices for the Côte d'Ivoire pilot case studies:

- 1. Education for Environmental Sanitation**
- 2. Water Vendors (recognised by SODECI)**
- 3. Social Water Connections Policy (SODECI)**
- 4. Water Standposts (all types)**

Divided into four heterogeneous groups, the participants provided a first analysis of the practices to be studied as to start-off the research consultant from CREPA. The participants were provided with a list of issues/questions which focused on the information necessary to carry out the case studies.

Wherever possible, the participants provided the research consultant with the source and nature of the information required. In this manner, the participants had an active role in guiding the development of the case studies and what should be the focus for each particular case study.

Future Activities

Project N° 5 is only at the beginning of its cycle, the first phase: the pilot case studies for both regions is well on its way and is expected to deliver combined results by the end of September 1998. From the results obtained we will be able to change and adapt the framework and methodology for the case studies as required (a larger workshop will be held at this stage). Following this, the activities (based on the Abidjan and Siavonga workshops) will be launched in the other participating countries. Once all case studies have been carried out and results obtained, the third phase of the project can commence, namely: developing the models and tools which will enable the scaling-up and replication of the positive 'practices'. The fourth and final phase is meant for the direct use of the guidelines in the field.

As mentioned in the project title, the focus of this project is strengthening the capacity of water utilities to deliver or increase their delivery of WSS & HHE services in low-income areas. By putting the water utilities central in the project and by promoting their contact with other service providers, we anticipate an increased interest of the utilities to collaborate with other service providers in the low-income urban areas. Demonstrating through the case studies that sustainable practices exist in these areas will hopefully have the desired effect of increased interest.