Putting the people's hands on the tap:
Water management innovations in Kano State

People in the community around Wudil, southwest of the city of Kano in Northern Nigeria, now have continuous access to potable piped water, some for the first time in 10 years. This is because of the rehabilitation of the Wudil Regional Water Scheme serving about 198,000 people. There are 15 similar regional schemes in Kano State and the government is keen to scale up the Wudil model to these schemes. If this were to happen, it has the potential to provide continuous clean water to over one million people.

What has the project done?

This issue-based project, begun in 2001, has developed a Community–Public Partnership in water supply management, and emphasises the participation of community members. The entire community participates in a Community Association, responsible for the collection of tariffs within its own area. Two committee members from each association also sit on the Board of Directors with representatives of local government. So, the project has created a culture where delivery is about joint efforts between communities, the Kano State Water Board, and local government. The Community Associations provide a voice for the people and they decide what the problems are and what they want to do about them.

How has it improved management?

The project has brought the plant, wells and pumps up to date. But, the real aim of an issue-based

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The project is to improve governance. So, in addition to upgrading infrastructure, it has worked with the Kano State Water Board to reform the management of the plant and water supply.

The new management structures build a clear link between the delivery of a high-quality service by the Government and payment for that service by the consumer. This link is something that has been lacking in Nigeria for many years. Now people have seen what is achievable, they are willing to pay more for clean water.

Are these improvements sustainable?

Kano State Government is committed to the project and has been involved at every stage in the process. It has already provided N70 million to support further improvement of the Wudil plant, and approximately N1 billion was accessed from MDG funds to rehabilitate pipelines and pumps. Importantly, the four local governments supplied by the scheme contribute towards the running costs. Revenue generation from water sales is also increasing.

What are the key points?

The project has empowered people to demand and expect improved service delivery, and has developed a model of Community–Public Partnership in the management and provision of water supply that could be replicated elsewhere.

The Wudil Regional Water Scheme delivers water to people in the community and receives payments from them. Importantly, local government subsidises water supply costs, contributing directly to the economy of the region and improving health in the community.

The Deputy State Governor sits on the State Water Committee and there is high-level political engagement in the rolling out of the Wudil model.

Other states are also looking at this model as a more sustainable alternative.

Who supported this work?

The UK Department for International Development’s State and Local Government Programme and the Kano State Water Board worked together on the Wudil Water Project.

What lessons have we learned?

Why has the Wudil model proved to be so successful?

- Community participation and the bottom-up approach are key.
- The success of the pilot has encouraged the government to develop a new water supply policy. Legislation that will allow for implementation of the policy is being prepared.
- Government is seen as a facilitator, rather than a provider, of development.
- Local governments are subsidising water supply.
- Access to water has increased through this continuous joint planning and implementation process.
- There is increased transparency in revenue projections, collection and accounting – a major lesson in public finance management.

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For more information

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