



LEARNING NOTE

EMPOWERED WASH SYSTEMS AT RURAL DISTRICT-LEVEL IN AFRICA (EMPOWERWASH-AFRICA PROGRAM)

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE MODEL FOR THE
DELIVERY OF DRINKING WATER SUPPLY SERVICES IN RURAL
AREAS IN BENIN

SUMMARY

The EMPOWERWASH-AFRICA programme was launched by the African Water and Sanitation Association (AAEA) with the support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. This project aims to improve Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) systems in rural communes, targeting 30 communes in six countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda). The first phase lasted one year from August 2023 to October 2024. In order to increase the impact of the program, AAEA drew inspiration from Benin's successful management models by organizing a Benchmarking mission from July 9 to 13, 2024 in Cotonou and the commune of Kpomassè.

This learning note presents the results of the benchmarking mission carried out in Benin. As part of this study, the aim is to analyze the management model of drinking water supply services in rural areas in Benin. Since 2017, the model in Benin has been organized around the National Agency for Rural Drinking Water Supply (ANAEPMR) which is responsible for planning, infrastructure management and the delegation of services to private operators using leasing contracts. This centralization allows for rigorous and consistent monitoring of service standards. However, it faces constraints such as resistance to change from mayors and rural communities, communication difficulties during water cuts, and inadequacies in infrastructure maintenance. In this learning note, AAEA will analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities of Benin's rural drinking water supply model.

INTRODUCTION

Access to adequate drinking water services is a major challenge in many African countries, especially in rural areas. In sub-Saharan Africa, 400 million people face a drinking water deficit. Only 46% of people in rural areas have access to safe drinking water, compared to 81% in urban areas. Only 24% of people in rural areas have improved sanitation facilities, compared to 42% in urban areas. The significant differences between urban and rural areas reveal the urgency of initiatives to improve access to water and sanitation in rural areas, where 80 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's population lives.

There is a significant mismatch between water policies and action strategies to facilitate access to water for rural populations. Service providers must overcome significant hurdles, including insufficient infrastructure and operational weakness, compounded by rapid population growth, strict regulations, and the impacts of climate change.

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, it is essential to carry out revisions at the institutional level, integrating new stakeholders such as municipalities and small-scale operators in the water and sanitation sector.

In this context, the African Water and Sanitation Association (AAEA), with the support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, has initiated the EMPOWERWASH-AFRICA programme. The objective of this program is to improve Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) systems in rural communes. The project targets 30 rural communes across six countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda. The program ran from August 2023 to October 2024.

To maximize effectiveness, AAEA has learned lessons from Benin's successful management model. In this perspective, a mission was organized in Cotonou, Benin, from July 9 to 13, 2024. The objective of the mission was to examine drinking water supply policies in rural areas in Benin, and to exchange with key players in the sector.

The objective of this learning note is to identify and document good practices.

The factors identified during the benchmarking mission to Benin will be useful to the AAEA to develop a program of its Strategic Business Plan 2024-2028 provides for a large access to drinking water and sanitation services in rural areas.

The learning note will present the Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats of the rural drinking water supply model in Benin

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Benchmarking mission in Benin used approaches to understand the best practices and obstacles that hinder the drinking water management model in rural Benin:

- **Documentary study / Literature review** : The Benchmarking Mission Team carried out documentary research based on reports and summary documents in the field of sanitation in Benin.
- **Interviews with key stakeholders**: The mission team interviewed industry stakeholders to obtain detailed information on the obstacles encountered.
- **Field visits**: the aim of this study is to get a first-hand look at the reality of the drinking water supply sector in rural areas in Benin.



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AAEA Photo Credit 1, 2: Visit to a drinking water supply point in rural Benin Kpomassè.



AAEA Photo Credit 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7: Meeting between the AAEA and Mr. Sylvain Adokpo-Migan, Director General of the ANAEMR, Mrs. Koussakou Déborah (Head of the planning of studies and works of the ANAEMR), Dr. Sègla Lihoussou (Executive Director of the National Association of Municipalities of Benin (ANCB), the members of the Municipal Council of the Rural Commune of Kpomassè,

RESULTS

MODEL FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE RURAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY SERVICE IN BENIN

The rural water service in Benin is mainly centralized under the supervision of the National Agency for Rural Drinking Water Supply (ANAEMR). Through this centralized model, policies and resources are coordinated consistently across the country. Centralization allows for a consistent approach to project planning and implementation, which facilitates monitoring and evaluation.

Key steps leading to the current model of delivery of the drinking water supply service in Benin



The current process of providing the drinking water supply service in Benin is based on the following essential steps and elements:

- 1) Conducting a diagnosis of water access problems (2015-2017):** A detailed analysis of the problems of access to drinking water and sanitation in rural areas was carried out in order to identify the major challenges.

- **2) Development of a supply strategy (2017-2030):** Based on this assessment, a national strategy for the supply of drinking water in rural areas has been developed, with a duration of **2017 to 2030.**
- **3) Development of a national master plan:** has been established to guide the development of infrastructure and guarantee homogeneous coverage of the Beninese national territory.
- **4) Establishment of building standards :** Strict laws and regulations have been put in place to ensure that all water installations meet the quality and quantity criteria required to ensure a reliable supply of drinking water in rural areas.
- **5) Definition of a management model :** Leasing and professional qualification: Professional private operators have been appointed to ensure the supply of drinking water under leasing contracts with the Beninese State. Regional operators are encouraged by these contracts to expand access to drinking water, improve the quality and sustainability of access to drinking water and sanitation services, reduce losses and optimize bill collection. ANAEPMR has chosen these operators (Omilayé and SBA) to ensure the operation, maintenance and distribution of drinking water in rural areas. Thanks to these leasing contracts, divided into three lots, more than three million Beninese will be able to benefit directly from clean, safe and affordable drinking water.

ANAEPMR ensures the supervision and accountability of private operators by drawing up semi-annual reports and carrying out regular audits.

ANALYSIS OF THE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE BENIN MODEL

The literature review and key informant interviews highlighted the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the current model of rural water service delivery in Benin:

FORCES

- Access to drinking water has increased from 42% in 2017 to 80% in 2024.
- Access to drinking water has developed rapidly in rural areas.
- Supported by private experts, ensuring more efficient maintenance and operation of infrastructure.
- Consistent quality standards for drinking water services across the country.
- Improved coordination of human and financial resources, avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Mobilization of \$900 million out of the \$1.6 billion needed, showing the attractiveness of the institutional framework and the new issuance model for investors.

WEAKNESSES

- Local actors such as mayors and rural communities are reluctant to adopt the new model.
- Getting used to the old management model and not knowing the benefits of the new system
- There is no efficient system to inform users of interruptions and interventions.
- Operators are abandoning some drinking water supply systems, leading to a decrease in coverage in some regions.
- Local governments do not play an active role in water management, which deprives them of revenue and control over water services.
- The problems encountered during the rehabilitation of abandoned infrastructure have an impact on the quality and availability of the service.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Implementation of new technologies and modern management approaches.
- Leasing contracts give private operators clearly defined responsibilities, which ensures greater transparency and accountability.
- Precise organization of responsibilities between the ANAEPMR and private actors.

THREATS

- Mayors and communities may struggle to accept and make the model effective.
- Risk of financial problems if the planned funding is not fully mobilized.
- Risk of late payments or mismanagement of financial resources.
- Difficulties in the effective implementation of the model, in particular due to the abandonment of infrastructure and communication problems.
- Lack of information on service disruptions that may affect user satisfaction.

LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of the benign model revealed several lessons, namely:

- As far as **the institutional aspect is concerned**, the model in Benin is based on the National Agency for the Supply of Drinking Water in Rural Areas (ANAEPMR) which is responsible for planning, infrastructure management and the delegation of services to private operators using leasing contracts
- **Awareness and training** : To offer awareness-raising and training opportunities to all actors in the supply of drinking water in Benin.
- **Access to finance**: Development partners must provide more financial resources to institutions responsible for the supply of drinking water in rural areas in Benin.
- **Networking and advocacy**: Establishing networks for the defense of the rights of users, municipalities can be advantageous, by providing a platform for the sharing of knowledge and experiences in Benin of rural drinking water supply.
- **Competence**: The selection criterion is the ability of private experts to take charge of the infrastructures, thus ensuring more efficient maintenance and operation.
- **Technology Option**: Development of New Technologies and Contemporary Management Approaches
- **Community participation**: a large participation of local populations through the analysis of their drinking water supply needs in rural areas in Benin

CONCLUSION

In summary, innovative and promising approaches to rural drinking water service provision in Benin, each with its own strengths and challenges. The Beninese model, based on management by professional private companies and a transparent contractual approach, has shown a clear increase in the rate of drinking water availability, reaching 80% by 2024. However, there is a need to overcome challenges such as the reluctance of some local actors to change, the low participation of municipalities in decision-making processes and communication difficulties.

In essence, the Beninese model, even if it differs in its innovative approach, shares a common goal: to guarantee sustainable and equitable access to drinking water for all rural communities. The model has

the potential to become models for other countries to follow as they seek effective solutions for rural drinking water supply and sanitation services, by investing in appropriate investments, rigorous management and continuous adaptation to local needs.

REFERENCES

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3. *Master plan for the supply of drinking water in rural areas in Benin*

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PROJECT DETAILS

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has given its support to the African Water and Sanitation Association (AAEA) to set up the EMPOWERWASH-AFRICA I program for a period of one year from August 2023 to October 2024. The objective of this programme is to improve water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) systems in rural communes, focusing on 30 rural communes in six countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda.

DISCLAIMER

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