



2015 UN-Water Annual
International Zaragoza
Conference
15–17 January 2015

Water and Sustainable Development
From vision to action



Achievements on WASH of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Niger

Sarah Reng-Ochekpe, Ministry of Water Resources, Nigeria

Short summary

Niger, 17.8 Million inhabitants (2013), is one of the world's poorest countries, with an average income of US\$ 413/Hab/y. Like other West African countries, Niger pledged to meet the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), and adopted a National Strategy on Poverty Reduction in January 2002 (SRP), aiming at reducing poverty from 63% to less than 50% by on 2015. In terms of the access to water, the goal was to increase the water supply coverage from less than 31% in 2001 to 59% in 2013. In particular, in the urban sector the goal was to reach 75% of the population through private connections or public standpipe. The Government is in charge of the water policy, management and tariff setting. The *Société de Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger* (SPEN) is the state-owned asset holding company which outsourced the operations for 10-years to the *Société d'Exploitation des Eaux du Niger* (SEEN), through a affermage-type contract associated with performance indicators (KPI).

The SEEN installed 115,000 connections (threefold), of which 58,000 social connections and 530 standpipes, to provide access to water to people under the poverty-line, their connections works being totally subsidized (except state taxes). For the social connections, the water is charged at 127 F/m³ for the first 10 m³, about half the price of the cost at standpipes or of supply by water vendors.

Issues addressed:

WASH (inequalities, schools, health centers, refugee camps, women and girls)

- One of the poorest country in the world
- MDGs related national water program
- Majority of urban dwellers lacking access to water in 2001
- Major impact on population development, especially women & girls

Water resources management (water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, sustainable extraction and supply of freshwater)

Non-revenue water was 22% at the contract launch.

Risks (mortality, economic losses caused by natural and human-induced disasters)

Burden of disease due to the lack of safe water supply.

Tools for implementation

Governance: Institutions / legal framework:

- National water program, whereby urban water supply assets are managed by a national public asset company (SPEN), which also controls the operator
- 10 years concession to a Private operator, Société d'Exploitation des Eaux du Niger (SEEN), in charge of daily actions + connecting new people etc.
- Developing access to the poorest was one of the contract performance goals, cascading in several technical criteria:
 - Increase of the number of connections
 - Non-revenue water control
 - Customer-oriented action such as social care to the poorest

Who is involved?:

- SEEN (Société d'Exploitation des Eaux du Niger) is a subsidiary of Veolia
- SPEN (Société de Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger), is the Nigerian Government asset holding company
- PEAMU (Projet Eau et Assainissement en Milieu Urbain), as technical and financial organ (Government of Niger and World Bank)
- The World Bank

What were the objectives of the intervention?:

- Access to water for all
- Increase of the number of connection
- Poverty alleviation
- Development of a social expertise within the operating company SEEN
- And, ex-post, validate the organizational set-up with a public asset holding Company overseeing the activity of a concession in charge of the daily activities

Implementation challenges:

- The entire SEEN needed an effective organization employing all the earlier staff.
- The SEEN needed an ambitious, comprehensive, capacity building program to enhance and professionalize the staff.
- The awareness of customers and local communities about water matters, water handling and hygiene was at stake.
- Within the overall works program, a specific program was designed to increase the number of connections.

Main task/activities undertaken:

- Veolia Health & Safety Direction and SEEN decided to train all 550 employees in partnership with Veolia Campus in 2007-2009, to enhance the awareness about Water, Sanitation & Hygiene, also to ensure

the employees would become Hygiene ambassadors towards local populations: neighbors, clients and external workers.

- A specific participatory methodology was developed to build on the actual staff knowledge. The employees asked to receive regular information about the water, hygiene, and related projects, and now display a more adapted communication and service towards customers.
- About the social connection, the SEEN developed a methodology
 - Field surveys to determine the technical feasibility of connections: the parcel of land must be built, inhabited, fenced, and no more than 30 m away of the mains
 - Information to target groups about the application for social connections, actual convection Works
 - Follow-up with the new customers, to increase their awareness about water conservation and hygiene, sustainable use of their connection: water saving, bill handling and payment
 - Other social matters
- For standpipes:
 - Selection of target neighborhoods, according to poverty of inhabitants, network and standpipe density
 - Standpipes planning: number, zones, etc.
 - Awareness raising meetings with local populations, NGOs, local communities and authorities;
 - Choice of local operators together with beneficiaries; training of the operators about their duties (maintenance, billing and collection)
 - Contract signature between SEEN and local operators

Main outcomes / impacts (what has changed?):

- Proportion of people with direct access to residential connection increased from 31% to 59%
- Number of residential connection increased from 56,000 to 172,000
- Water is now provided on a continuous basis in most urban centers and areas of Niamey
- 98% compliance with microbiological standards
- Non-revenue water fell from 22% down to 17%
- Bill collection ratio increased from 91 to 97%
- Staff productivity increased from 8.6 to 3.6 staff per connection
- SEEN is able to recover its O&M costs, service its debt, and contribute to CAPEX –no longer relying on government subsidies
- It is anticipated, based on the scientific literature, that the water supply & hygiene improvements yield tangible public health benefits with reduced waterborne diseases.

Lessons learned

Triggers:

- Accountability of national authorities
- Financial support & engineering of the World Bank

Drivers:

- Stakeholders awareness about the challenge
- Investment capacities of the International Finance Institutions
- Professionalism of SEEN, and transparency in the overall project management;
- Involvement of local authorities, at state and local level, including traditional authorities, e.g. in local operator choice
- Growing awareness of local populations about drinking water and hygiene matters

Barriers:

- Insufficiencies of the network structure especially in suburban quarters
- Short finance
- Lack of master plan

What has worked well?:

- The separation of powers and clear roles definition between the Asset company (SPEN) and the operating company (SEEN)
- The capacity development, including the implication of the Veolia campus, to reach out to local populations (neighborhood meetings gathering water users, local authorities, NGOs, etc.)
- The Corporate Social Responsibility of the Private operator
- The communication programs

What can be improved?:

- Keeping pace with the growing expectations of the population
- Some local social issues remain to be addressed/ or the way to address them needs to evolve.

The way forward:

- An internal assessment of the social connection program is underway, with a view to review the performances for permanent improvement:
 - Process adaptation
 - Communication
- Identification and description of social & economical bottlenecks.