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## Implementing the PAWS model of capacity building in Nigeria

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WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE:  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES

**Implementing the PAWS model  
of capacity building in Nigeria**

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*Capacity building is a key development intervention offered to developing countries. However, having capacity building as the only intervention offered by a programme, without any infrastructure component, is a rare approach and quite challenging. Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) is one of few programmes that has taken the less attractive “capacity building only” approach towards intervention in the water and sanitation sector in Africa, and the challenges and lessons from the programme in Nigeria are remarkable. Nigeria has enormous human, natural and financial resources, but harnessing them to help meet development targets, especially for water and sanitation services, has been mostly unsuccessful. Nigeria still ranks among the top 10 water-poor countries and is far off-track to meeting the MDG targets for water and sanitation (JMP, 2008). PAWS’ support in Nigeria is focused on the water supply and sanitation sector reform programme at 3 tiers of government (Federal, State, Local), through a strategic partnership approach to implementation, which is responsible for the achievements recorded to date.*

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## **Background**

Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) is a unique tri-sector partnership operating in the water sector, established at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The DFID-funded programme delivers capacity building support and knowledge sharing, in which partners from the UK water sector respond to expressed demand from partner organizations in the water and sanitation sector in Africa. Its UK partner base is a wide range of partners from the private sector, civil society, government and independents. PAWS is presently active in three African countries; Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia.

PAWS’ engagement with Nigeria started in 2005, with the support of WaterAid Nigeria. The first project to initiate PAWS’ work was a tripartite partnership between the Benue State government, PAWS and WaterAid Nigeria. The achievements made in the Benue support generated invitations for PAWS technical advice to other WaterAid Nigeria supported projects. In 2007, PAWS signed an agreement with the National Planning Commission (NPC) of Nigeria, recognizing PAWS as an external support agency and giving it the authority to operate in Nigeria. Since the agreement with the NPC, PAWS has signed MoUs with three strategic partners in Nigeria and has supported about 20 in-country visits as well as remote (UK-based) support, for technical advice and capacity development with partner organisations. The main PAWS partners in Nigeria are: WaterAid Nigeria, The Federal Ministry of Water Resources, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, Anambra State and Benue State Governments.

## **Country context**

The Federal system of government in Nigeria gives responsibility of water and sanitation service provision to the three tiers of government; federal, state, and local government. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources is responsible for the formulation and coordination of policies and information on water resources development and the approval of development projects at the national level. Each of the 36 states and 774 local governments has a ministry and a department respectively that is responsible for water and sanitation

services. This extent of human resources in water and sanitation sector service delivery underscores the need for institutional capacity development at the three levels of government.

The water and sanitation sector is also divided into three sub-sectors; urban, small towns and rural. Each state has a state-owned water utility (water board or corporation) that is responsible for water supply services in the urban cities and towns, and in some cases the small towns. Some states (e.g Benue and Plateau) have a rural water supply and sanitation agency specifically responsible for water and sanitation services to the rural areas. With the poor state of services, and declining water and sanitation coverage, the capacity requirements in Nigeria relate to the governance level (policy, legislation and strategy), the service provider level across the three subsectors (planning, operation and maintenance) and the community level (demand, participation and skills).

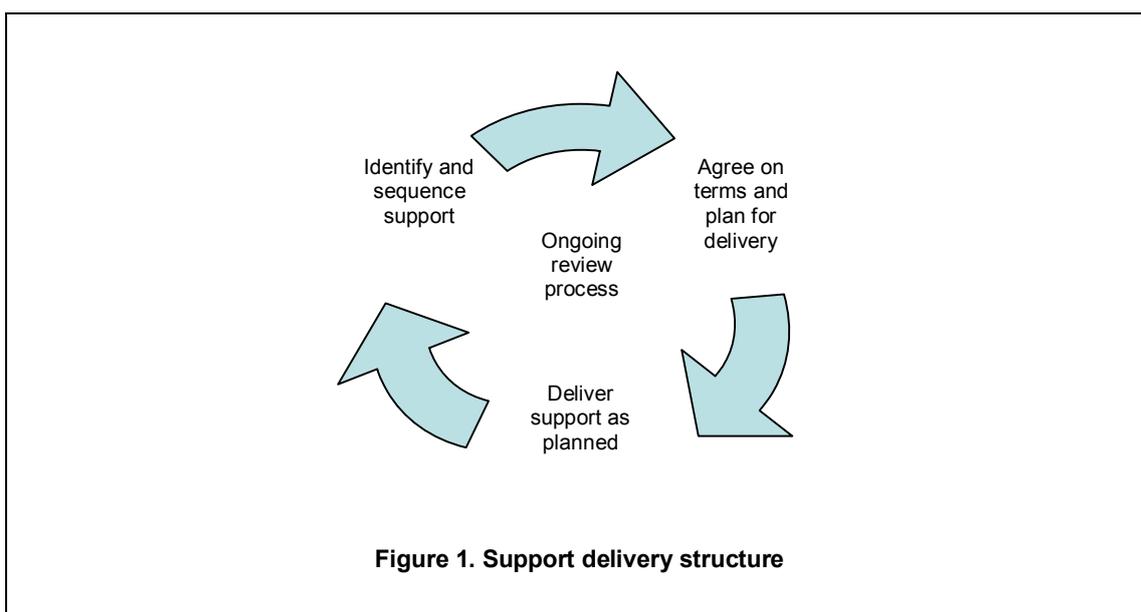
The Federal Ministry of Water Resources initiated a Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Programme (WSSSRP) in 2000. The initial focus areas of the reform programme are policy reform, legal reform and institutional reforms. Donor agencies and NGOs in Nigeria are supporting the implementation of these reforms, which has engendered the production of policy, strategy and guideline documents at the national level and in some States. PAWS' work in Nigeria is therefore delivered within the context of the broader WSSSRP, with a focus on institutional capacity improvement and skills development.

### **PAWS' approach in Nigeria**

The guiding principles of the WSSSRP are based on the National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy of 2000. The policy sets out the structure, roles and responsibilities, and institutional relationships in the sector. Key principles affecting demand, equity, autonomy, ownership, management and funding mechanisms are clearly stated. PAWS' work in Nigeria is essentially supporting the implementation of the policy at the national, state, local government, and community levels, based on the following five point approach;

1. Sector level review: The 36 States in Nigeria are sometimes regarded as 36 countries, due to their sizes, population, and socio-political differences. Therefore an assessment of the political and policy environment of a potential in-country partner (national, state, local government or community) is carried out to gain a clear understanding of the context in which support should best be provided.
2. Identify investment source: Consumers of water and sanitation services are more concerned about the end result of support, i.e. the availability of water and sanitation services. Since PAWS does not provide funding or materials for service delivery, it is more effective to align with a strategic partner that is investing in infrastructure or already funding certain reform activities. Such strategic partnership may be from government, a donor project or NGO).
3. Identify beneficiaries: Working with strategic partners on a project can risk PAWS being seen to take the role of project consultants, which makes the strategic partner the beneficiary. Clearly identifying the 'beneficiaries' of capacity building support (be that the policy maker, service provider, regulator or consumer) is the first agreement to be made with strategic partners.
4. Define input: PAWS aims to compliment the work of existing project consultants. This means that well funded projects in which PAWS operates are still likely to require the support of project consultants. A clear distinction of PAWS' offering and input (in terms of capacity building through institutional development, technical advice or training), is essential to agree with the strategic partner and the beneficiary.
5. Deliver in context: Project objectives and deliverables between PAWS' support programmes may sound similar, but the context within which each is applied is different. The diversity in Nigeria (there are 250 ethnic groups) affects the socio-economic dynamics of each location, making every project unique. PAWS' project delivery approach is based on a clear understanding and respect for the context, which helps maintain the quality of support.

PAWS operates through a programmatic approach to support delivery with its partners in Nigeria. This helps to improve effectiveness and efficiency in both project management and support delivery mechanisms. The support delivery structure is indicated in Figure 1.



### Case studies

The following 3 case studies of support projects have been selected to highlight the specific aspects of institutional development, technical advice and training dimensions of PAWS' work in Nigeria. The projects are located in 3 different geo-political zones of the country (out of a total of 6 geo-political zones), with resulting differences in the socio-political dynamics.

### Lessons learnt

PAWS' capacity building is a courageous approach to supporting water and sanitation service improvement in Nigeria. External support from developed countries is known to be in the form of funding, with materials in some cases, making a 'capacity building only' intervention a unique approach requiring carefully thought-out strategies to make it effective. PAWS has learnt valuable lessons in the processes of implementing its programme in Nigeria, which helps to define the strategy for future activities and partnerships. The key lessons learnt and how they inform our implementation strategy are not unique to Nigeria and may be useful to other countries and programmes:

- **Desire for improvement:** Capacity building can only be effective when there is desire for it. The beneficiary must own the decision for capacity building, but it is not an easy task to create that desire. PAWS applies an approach where questions are asked, rather than answers given. That way the answers tend to come from the beneficiaries, creating the demand for capacity improvement.
- **Unlocking existing strengths:** Most beneficiaries of PAWS capacity building support have a lot of knowledge of the work they do (or are tasked to do). PAWS support helps to unlock the existing potential through different thinking. The approach emphasises the existing strengths rather than weaknesses, which helps boost morale and commitment.
- **Context determines effectiveness:** For effective capacity building, the context in which the project is delivered is very critical. Project objectives, scope and deliverables may be similar, but each project is unique. The implementation strategy for PAWS work is an initial understanding of the socio-political environment and governance structure, helping to deliver support in context.
- **The higher you go, the more political it gets:** Politics affects almost all economic and social activities in Nigeria, even at the community level. Challenges become more political than technical as you move up to the local government, then state, and then federal level. Political buy-in is most critical to all support activities and PAWS establishes political support for the activities of each project.
- **Complex process:** As PAWS does not bring money to the sector, the beneficiary may be left wondering what is in it for them, together with the political implications, in the initial stages of engagement. Patience, people management skills, flexibility with timing for support and the application of subtle pressure may all be necessary at times.

- Process takes time, impact lasts long: The initial stages of support need time for the beneficiary to appreciate what PAWS can offer and implement the recommendations provided. The outcome of the continuous mentoring and support provided through the PAWS approach has a significant positive impact on the beneficiary with the potential for lasting benefits.

### **Anambra State Water and Sanitation Sector Reform programme**

Anambra State water and sanitation sector reform team is tasked with reforming the entire sector in the state, for sustainable water and sanitation services. The team comprises government staff and consultants for a reform programme that cuts across the state, local governments and communities with support from the European Commission.

PAWS input has been addressing capacity in areas of:

- institutional scanning to identify roles and responsibilities, capacity and management requirements, policy, regulation, accountability and environmental issues in the sector;
- advice on a sector reform road map, complete with a restructuring and change management plan; and
- advice on water supply master planning, investment planning and state-level water sector policy development.

The reform team has since carried out a more detailed institutional assessment, guided by the initial institutional scanning by PAWS. Restructuring of ministries and government agencies in the sector was successfully carried out in line with the advice and guidance of the PAWS reform roadmap and change management plan. The rapid water supply master planning and policy guidance advice is assisting the state reform team in the development of a water supply master plan and a water supply and sanitation policy document for the state. PAWS support in Anambra State is moving towards a focus on individual organizations in the sector, to help improve planning, management, and effective coordination.

### **Bauchi State Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project**

WaterAid Nigeria is supporting small town water supply and sanitation projects in Bauchi state. They requested for PAWS support in the rehabilitation of schemes in Kafin Madaki and Dass communities, for which Bauchi State Water Board (BSWB) is the state agency responsible for water supply. To date, PAWS has provided capacity building support for:

- technical assessment of the Kafin Madaki small town water supply scheme, with specific recommendations on the next steps on the rehabilitation of the scheme; and
- small town water supply scheme management training, for the Water Consumers Association (community water management team) and BSWB staff.

The Kafin Madaki scheme has since been successfully rehabilitated and is supplying water, with the Water Consumers Association working with BSWB in the operation and management of the scheme. WaterAid Nigeria is working on replication of the Kafin Madaki success although gaps in available data make this a significant challenge. BSWB is implementing the PAWS recommendation on data gathering and testing in Dass, which will be applied at other locations. Further PAWS support will focus on strengthening the skills of BSWB and the Water Consumers Associations.

## Benue State Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project

The government of Benue State, PAWS and WaterAid Nigeria entered into a tripartite partnership for the improvement of water and sanitation services in small towns in Benue. The partnership focused on the rehabilitation of 3 small town schemes as a pilot, with capacity building and community involvement. PAWS support has focussed on:

- stakeholder awareness on roles, responsibilities, ownership, and the need for a state water and sanitation policy;
- a training programme on evaluation of water supply systems and baseline data guideline;
- technical assessment of the 3 schemes, with specific recommendations on the rehabilitation processes;
- a small town water supply scheme management training workshop for the Water Consumers Association and the State Technical Unit (STU).

Following PAWS' support, Water Consumers Associations have been established in the 3 pilot towns, a comprehensive baseline study of the towns has been completed with rehabilitation completed on 2 of the schemes that are now in operation. Benue State has a water supply and sanitation policy developed and approved. Future PAWS support will focus on effective replication and strengthening of the skills of the STU and the Water Consumers Associations.

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