blue book
water, life people
Niger

Situation Analysis

The policy framework of the water and sanitation sector

The Ministry that is in charge of Water supervises the sector through three central directorates and a network of decentralized services (the DRH). After a long period of direct management of projects and control of works, the Ministry and the DRHs have difficulties dealing with their new functions of programming, coordination and "facilitation" of the sector. The main difficulty is the significant discrepancy between the human resources that the Ministry has at its disposal and its current mission.

The urban water sector, which covers the capital Niamey and fifty or so secondary towns, was reorganized in 2001. The former public company (the SNE) was replaced by a public asset holding company (the SPEN) linked through a lease contract with a private company (the SEEN, whose major shareholder is Veolia). The regulation of urban water is guaranteed by a multi-sectorial agency which was put in place in the course of 2003, but which, in the opinion of the majority of actors in the sector, is still far from fully operational.

According to the decentralization laws, the municipalities are theoretically responsible for water and sanitation, but decentralization is advancing slowly and in reality local authorities are still only very marginally involved. Outside of the SPEN-SEEN perimeter, water service is usually provided by users' associations or village water point committees. There is an enormous need for capacity building at local level. Although certain urban municipalities are starting taking responsibility for water and sanitation services, the rural municipalities will still be absent from the sector for a long time.

After the return to political stability at the end of the 1990s, the government of Niger published two sectorial policy letters (both of which were dictated by the World Bank), which have not been truly integrated in the institutional framework. Since then, the sectorial strategy appears to be hesitating between putting in place an ambitious and very centralized National Water Supply Program, and the incorporation of water and sanitation in other programming frameworks (such as, for example, poverty reduction or the strategies for rural and urban development). In spite of efforts by the Ministry the approach as a whole still lacks visibility and specific action regarding the MDGs has yet to be taken.

Niger and its inhabitants

Niger is a vast and arid country (in the wettest zone in the country, precipitation is still less than 800 mm per year). The surface water, which is essentially the Niger river, is relatively important, even if only 1% is being exploited. About 20% of the renewable groundwater is exploited with strong technical constraints in some areas (the productive aquifer lies very deep and is therefore expensive to reach). In terms of water resources, the country as a whole is therefore in a reasonably favorable position.

The last general population census took place in 2001, but has still not been officially published. Extrapolating the population growth rate of the1990s - at 3.1% one of the highest in the sub-region - produces an estimated population of 11.8 million inhabitants in 2004 and a projection of reaching close to 14 million by 2015 (based on the hypothesis of slight reduction in demographic growth). Niger is still a very rural country, the urban population is estimated to be less than 20% and lives mainly in the capital Niamey which will have over 1 million inhabitants by the year 2010.

In summary, the following actors currently operate in the sector: the State and its ramifications which for the moment are in charge of the portfolio of internationally financed project; the incipient local authorities in rural areas which are trying to obtain recognition, legitimacy and institutional capacity, as well as the necessary financing to implement their mandate in the area of water and sanitation; the NGOs that finance infrastructure projects (mainly in rural areas) and provide a support focused on training in maintenance of water and sanitation facilities; the local private sector, for a long time limited to executing or supervising infrastructure works, but which is becoming involved in the area of delegated management; the international private sector which provides water service in large and medium towns (the small towns and the villages are justly or unjustly considered non profitable enough); the upcoming users' associations and the older management committees but which lack competence, resources and internal organization to assure a good level of control over the public and private action.

eau vive

Sanitation suffers from an obvious lack of priorization (most notably with respect to funding), from too many intervening parties, from an overlap of responsibilities, and from the absence of a strategy defined at central level with a clear leadership, in spite of progress that had previously been made (for example the declaration of Hamdallaye). Given that basic sanitation is guaranteed by on-site facilities, the critical overarching issue for most of the towns is the definition of a public policy for storage of faecal sludge removed from septic tanks and pit latrines.

The coordination of the sector and the intervening parties should be guaranteed by the National Commission for Water and Sanitation (Commission Nationale de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement-CNEA). The process of putting this Commission in place is being led, since 2003, by a temporary Committee. The central administration is over-represented within the CNEA and its mode of functioning is quite rigid. The CNEA as well as the transitory Committee exists mainly on paper, without the true means to implement the mission that was assigned to it. To the present moment, no specific action has been foreseen with respect to the millennium development goals.

Who has access to the water and sanitation services?

In Niger, the criteria for attributing water points are generous: one modern water point (cement well or borehole fitted with a hand pump) per group of 250 inhabitants[1]. According to the legislation, once a settlement reaches 1,500 inhabitants it can benefit from a simplifed water supply system (AEP), and over 2,000 inhabitants from a full water supply system (a “mini-AEP”). This reasoning, on the basis of ”attribution criteria” rather than on the basis of population to be served has the inconvenience of quickly sidelining the issue of the marginal cost of providing water service in rural areas which are less densely populated.

Outside of the SPEN-SEEN perimeter, the coverage rate is not easy to determine, because the base-line data remain unreliable (in spite of the recent updating of the SIGNER water point data base), and because it is unclear whether facilities are actually operational - recent surveys have shown that more than a third of the hand pumps do not work. The coverage rate calculated by the

[1] For all villages, regardless of their size, if it is located at more than 4 km from an existing water point.

	1990			2004			2015 Goals			Gap		
	population	coverage		population	coverage		population	coverage		population	investments	
	million	million	%	million	million	%	million	million	%	million	per year	million $
rural	6,5	3,3	51 %	9,7	4,6	50 %	10,2	7,7	75 %	3,1	15,3	168,3
urban	1,2	0,8	65 %	2,1	1,5	70 %	3,8	3,2	85 %	1,7	13,5	148,7
TOTAL	**7,7**	**4,1**	**53 %**	**11,8**	**6,1**	**57 %**	**14,0**	**10,9**	**78 %**	**4,8**	**28,8**	**317,0**
rural	6,5	0,3	4 %	9,7	0,4	5 %	10,2	5,4	53 %	4,9	3,9	43,4
urban	1,2	0,9	71 %	2,1	1,7	79 %	3,8	3,4	90 %	1,7	3,3	36,6
TOTAL	**7,7**	**1,1**	**14 %**	**11,8**	**2,2**	**20 %**	**14,0**	**8,8**	**63 %**	**6,6**	**7,3**	**80,0**

water sanitation

Source : Estimates by Hydroconseil (2004)

Olivia Dabbous

Ministry is thus more a reflection of theoretical needs and does not provide adequate information about the real access to public water service.

Within the SPEN-SEEN perimeter (fifty or so towns) the coverage rate is estimated at around 70%, and approximately 60,000 families are connected to the distribution network. In the remainder of the country (the rural area and the small towns which are not served by SEEN), the estimated coverage rate is on average 50% (the Committee of the Ministry in charge of water has estimated that the rate at the end of 2003 was 56,85%). The water access rate at national level is thus 57%, which still leaves 6.7 million without access to the service.

As far as sanitation is concerned, determining the access rate depends on the level of service that is taken as a standard. In the large towns, most families have access to a sanitation facility, but it is rarely an "improved" facility (normally these are traditional latrines). In the rural areas the sanitation coverage is very weak, regardless of the technology. It is estimated that less than 20% of the inhabitants of Niger have access to proper sanitation, with very strong disparities between the rural areas and the large towns.

How much will the MDGs cost?

How much will the MDGs cost in Niger? Estimating the coverage rate allows us to estimate the population to be served. It now becomes necessary to determine the unit costs per connected user (for water and for sanitation). A review of projects that are being prepared leads to the following unit costs:

- for water: rural 65$, urban 105$;
- for sanitation: rural 10$, urban 25$.

A survey of implementing agencies and donors was recently conducted in order to evaluate their portfolio of projects. The investments programmed for 2001 through 2007 are estimated at around 98 million CFA francs in total, or 23,3 million US dollars per year. This investment is divided into 12,5 million US dollars for urban water, 10,5 million for rural water, and 0,36 million for urban sanitation.

A comparison of these numbers with those in the table above shows that the investment which is required for achieving the MDG (estimated at 36 million US dollars per year, or almost 2% of PNB) is more or less secured for the urban area (SPEN-SEEN perimeter), but only for two thirds for the rural areas.

On the other hand, at present very little financial resources are foreseen for achieving the sanitation MDG in both the rural and urban areas and this shortfall will be increasingly difficult to make up for. The Government and the donors should thus concentrate their efforts on sanitation.

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Challenges

Niger

In order to attain the millennium development goals for water and sanitation, Niger needs to meet seven major challenges. Each challenge corresponds to one or more endeavors to be rapidly addressed (these endeavors are presented in detail on pages 6 and 7). The challenges are formulated in such as way that they can be objectively monitored, and are based on measurable and verifiable indicators.

1. Improving access to water of economically and geographically disadvantaged population groups

The available financing will increase over the coming years. Unless fund are specifically targeted, they will not automatically benefit the most disadvantaged users. It is therefore necessary to give priority to the use of these funds to improve access in the unplanned districts of large towns and the isolated rural areas.

Indicator • Coverage rate of the 40% poorest users in the rural and peri-urban areas (this includes three towns: Niamey, Maradi, Zinder).

2. Strengthening the role and capacity of the local actors

Even though the municipalities have been given new competencies with respect to water and sanitation, they still lack capacity, just as it is the case with the users associations and other actors at local level. Developing a real capacity to manage investments and services at local level is thus a major challenge in achieving the MDGs and it will require additional funds.

Indicators • Availability of practical tools for local actors • Percentage of financing that is channeled directly to the local authority (municipality, local level authority or users association).

3. Giving exclusive priority to sanitation

Less than one in five inhabitants of Niger has access to proper sanitation, one of the lowest access rates in Africa. The millennium development goal for sanitation will not be achieved without substantial policy commitment at national and municipal level and without a significant increase in financing.

Indicators • Number of households that have improved sanitation facilities • Proportion of financing allocated to sanitation, in particular in the poverty reduction budgets.

4. Improving access to water supply in small towns

Small towns today play a key role in the economic activity and in a balanced development of the country. There is a critical need for infrastructure in small towns for which it is not always easy to find financing. It is estimated that over 400 small towns need to be equipped with a water network between now and 2015.

Indicators • Number of towns with over 1,500 inhabitants that have been equipped with a mini-AEP • Number of consumers (private house connections) in each mini-AEP.

5. Helping the sector to keep a positive balance sheet

Even though it exists, the capacity to pay is still weak while the operational costs continue to increase (growth in the number of mini-AEP, importance of financing sanitation, renewal of the infrastructure financed at the time of the International Decade for Clean Drinking Water and which is reaching the end of its life span, etc.). In order to ensure a durable improvement in access, it is necessary to ensure that the overall financial equilibrium of the sector is maintained.

Indicators • SEEN tariff structure • Average price practiced in the small towns • Cumulative sum of the investment projects over the previous year • Access rate of users' associations to bank credit.

6. Reducing unit costs

Achieving the MDGs requires to scale up. In order to do so, the unit costs should be reduced by 20 to 50%, so more can be achieved with the available budget. This specifically includes ensuring that the effectiveness of projects is improved, carrying out sound preparatory studies to ensure that the project design is in line with local conditions and allowing for competition between actors from the private sector.

Indicator • Real average cost (all included) of access to water or sanitation by a rural or urban user, as a function of the level of service (wells, hand pump, household connection to a pipe network, improved latrine).

■

The millennium endeavor

Developing access to basic services

• **Double the SEEN network connection rate.** In the 51 towns that are served by the SEEN, there are 40 people to each household connection. Increasing the number of household connections, for which there is a real demand, is a good indicator of improvement in the quality of service. A partial subsidy may make it possible to improve the penetration of this service among the poorest users.

• **Provide service to the peripheral districts of Niamey.** It is imperative that (planned and unplanned) districts in the peri-urban of Niamey be taken into account in the water service strategy for the city as a whole, and that specific projects be put in place to target these districts. New solutions should be put in place: independent small networks or delegation to small scale operators.

• **Construct 50 mini-AEP per year in small towns.** Small towns in Niger are notoriously under-equipped and it is estimated that 50 mini-AEP will need to be constructed per year to overcome the shortfall. Financing for these mini-AEP should be guaranteed through international aid, in combination with a strong participation of users and the private operators who are interested in managing the service. The available alternatives should reflect the diversity in local situations.

• **Construct large diameters wells in rural and stock breeding areas.** Modern (large diameter) wells are part of the water service in rural areas, and the construction of such wells should be encouraged given that they respond to a true demand. This requires that equipment projects develop a true demand driven approach with a catalogue of supply options which includes modern wells.

Improving the institutional framework

• **Strengthen the link with the poverty reduction strategy.** This involves strengthening the link between the water and sanitation sector and the Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework (Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté - CSLP). The financial resources that are foreseen for the sector in the CSLP should increase. The objective should be 6% of the available budget (4% for water and 2% for sanitation), as compared to only 3% in the last CSLP (2002).

• **Make the National Water and Sanitation Commission (CNEA) operational.** The CNEA is today one of the few joint coordination structures in the sector, which brings together public authorities, civil society and development partners. But it is still far from being truly operational. This structure should bring together partners in defining national strategies. The level of functioning of the CNEA will thus be a good indicator of the level of coordination and good governance in the sector.

• **Improve knowledge and monitoring of access to water and sanitation.** The SIGNER data base is an interesting tool, but which is difficult to regularly update and is mainly designed for programming (for water only). There is thus a real need for a simple and effective tool for measuring real access by users to basic water and sanitation services.

• **Develop capacity for action among civil society.** Civil society should be strengthened and the administration should delegate more functions to it and give it greater representation. On the other hand, even though they are frequently mentioned in all strategy documents, the private operators rarely have a voice or a place within the institutional framework. The MDG will not be achieved without a strong involvement of private operators.

Olivia Dabbous

Christophe Le Jallé

Giving priority to sanitation

• **Equip the 10 largest towns in Niger with strategic sanitation plans.** Sanitation is a complex sector and requires strong leadership at local level. The drafting - based on the model developed in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) 15 years ago - of strategic sanitation plans should be an absolute priority (at least for the largest towns in Niger) and should be based upon a consensus among the actors.

• **Construct 500,000 latrines.** In order to attain the millennium development goal for sanitation, public action should focus on information to users and on promoting improved sanitation facilities. Subsidizing the works can be part of this strategy, provided that it is well targeted and encourages families to invest in the improvement of their facilities.

• **Construct disposal sites for faecal sludge in Niamey, Maradi and Zinder.** On-site sanitation will continue to grow in urban areas, and the evacuation chain for faecal sludge from the pit latrines should be strengthened. Public action should concentrate in particular on the construction of environmentally safe and economically viable disposal sites for faecal sludge.

Decentralizing financing

• **Develop practical financial tools that are accessible to local operators.** With the exception of some NGO projects, the majority of financing to the sector continues to be channeled through the central level, which is in contradiction with the spirit of decentralization. It is urgent that locally available financing be put in place, whether this concerns grants (in the framework of projects) or bank credit.

• **Promote local financing of on-site sanitation.** Contrary to the situation in the water sector, sanitation continues to be an investment that is made at family level, and the contribution of households to the operational costs is limited. The financing of sanitation (local tax, micro-credit for families) is an endeavor that still needs to be developed.

Guaranteeing durable services

• **Strengthen the capacity of local actors and develop practical tools.** The institutional framework as well as practices in the sector have changed profoundly in the last 10 years in Niger. There are today very few practical tools for local actors (users' associations, operators, local authorities). The most urgent will be to develop practical guidelines for the implementation of projects and the management of infrastructures and to ensure that these are widely disseminated.

• **Improve the weak supply chain for hand pumps.** Hand pumps continue to constitute a feasible option in rural areas, provided that weaknesses in the maintenance and the supply chain be ironed out. Here too, the strategy should focus on local operators who can distribute spare parts or repair the pumps, and on committees which collect the necessary funds.

• **Develop professional support for the water services operators in small towns.** The managers of water services in large towns, whether these are associations or private operators, do not always have the necessary capacity to ensure quality service. It therefore becomes important that a specialized support unit for mini-AEP be developed, competent in both technical and financial aspects, and if possible self-financed through the price of water in order to guarantee the sustainability of this structure

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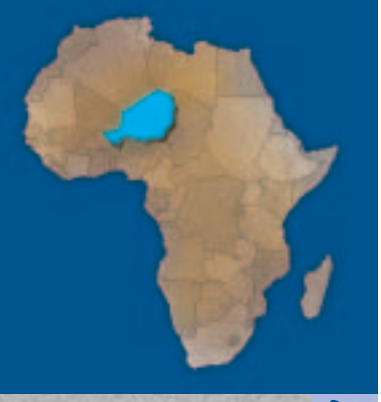

blue book niger

water, life, people

The publication of the Blue Book : water - life - people is the result of a commitment made in Kyoto (March 2003) by the World Assembly of Water Wisdom (Assemblée Mondiale des Sages de l'Eau - AMSE). The Blue Book aims at reporting on the progress made in the water and sanitation sector towards reaching the millennium development goals (MDGs).

It is directed to all the stakeholders of the water and sanitation sector in the country, as well as to the technical and financial international partners. It reports, among other issues, on the place of civil society, on policies for decentralization and on locally available financing tools.

Each Blue Book offers a different, and more critical, vision of the water and sanitation sector in a given country, by independently and at regular intervals (every three or five years) measuring the progress made and by striving to put forward the opinion of the users and citizens whenever possible. Three Blue Books - covering three countries: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger - were published simultaneously in March 2005.

In the long run, the World Assembly of Water Wisdom hopes that the process of preparing and publishing the Blue Books will provide an independent vision of the water and sanitation sector, which is capable of developing its own analysis methods, of regularly measuring agreed upon indicators, and which offers a non-conventional vision of policy and public strategy, without taking ideological sides or trying to disguise reality.

What is the added value of the Blue Book?

- It is a participatory process that started on the basis of the reality in the field, and is based on a critical analysis of observed situations in the area of water and sanitation.
- It is a tool that promotes exchange, dialogue and mobilization of all actors in the area of water management, in order to promote large scale project portfolios from the civil society.
- At country level, and in the framework of making a choice between priorities for sustainable development, the Blue Book strengthens local initiatives, the right to water and poverty reduction.
- At regional level, the Blue Book contributes to building a vision, and engages the international community in promoting more innovative and effective means of cooperation.

Collaborators. The Blue Book is an initiative of the International Secretariat for Water (ISW). It is supported by partners which have all been involved at one moment or the other in the process based on their competence and their knowledge of the field.

The team • **Chairman:** Raymond Jost • **International Consultant:** Bruno Valfrey • **National consultant:** Zabeirou Yacouba • **Piloting Committee:** Célyne Andureau, Jean-Bosco Bazié, Janique Etienne, Alain Henry, Raymond Jost, Christophe Le Jallé, Mathilde Loury, Bruno Valfrey, Maggie White • **Western Africa Coordinator:** Jean-Bosco Bazié • **Resource persons:** Marc Lévy, Makama Oumarou, Alain Riès, Stef Lambrecht

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Le secrétariat international de l'eau
The International Secretariat for Water
El secretariado internacional del agua

7, rue de la Commune Ouest # 203
Montréal (Québec) • Canada H2Y 2C5
Phone: + 1 514 849-4262 • Fax: + 1 514 849-2822
www.i-s-w.org • info@i-s-w.org

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