

COMMUNIQUE OF A TWO-DAY NATIONAL NGO CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON WATER AND SANITATION HELD FROM 3 – 4 DECEMBER, 2003 AT HEINRICH BOELL FOUNDATION, SW IKOYL, LAGOS.

The consultative meeting organized by the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANE EJ), a Benin-based NGO, with the support from Heinrich Boll Foundation, drew participants from a cross-section of civil society organization across the country with the Honourable Minister for Water Resources Representative in attendance.

The meeting considered the major issues, challenges and opportunities around water and sanitation in Nigeria.

Specifically, the National Water Management Policy still in the process and the Presidential Water Initiative enunciated by the present administration came under sharp focus.

The meeting also deliberated on the need for a National Sanitation Policy and the yawning gap of communication between the government and the Civil Society as it affects water harnessing, procurement and distributions.

It also considered access of the poor – who make up over 70 per cent of Nigerians living below poverty line – to water in line with the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The role of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) particularly the World Bank and IMF were also reviewed in line with the drive for the privatization of public Water/Sanitation Corporations and organizations.

The poor sanitary condition in the country as well as waste management issues were discussed.

Community participation in project conceptualization, implementation and monitoring were discussed and the Porto Allegre, Brazil model was shared.

The consultative meeting frowned at the long absence of a National Policy on Water Management and the non-participation of the Civil Society in the preparation of the National Sanitation Policy.

It also expressed deep concern on the non-inclusion of civil society organizations networks in the conceptualization, community mobilization, implementation and monitoring of water and sanitation projects in the country.

The meeting also believes that for NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, there must be openness, transparency, and public accountability in the water and sanitation sub-sectors which will take on board the civil society organizations in Nigeria.

The forum agreed that there is the need for the bridging of the gap in communication among water and sanitation sector considering the importance of water and sanitation to the people and the poverty level of citizens, the forum frowns at the on going water privatization agenda being promoted by the IFIs.

The Forum observed with nostalgia the collapse of public water sector across the county and suggested that only a good democratic governance setting that ensures transparency and accountability that can revive them and not privatization of such utilities. The forum also opined that private sector interested in setting up their water and sanitation outfits should be encouraged by government to make their own investments and certainly not at the peril of the public utilities.

In the light of these, the National NGO Consultative Meeting resolves as follows:

1. That the Federal Ministry of Water Resources should open a space for Civil Society's participation in Water and Sanitation issues more that what currently subsists and calls for a speed up action on its management policy.
2. The meeting raised some critical concerns on the on-going privatization in the water sector and demands for more consultation, participation and dialogue especially with civil society organizations and affected local communities. That a Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation is hereby established with its name, mission statement, structure and secretariat.
3. That the steering committee of the Network should in the next three months facilitate the launching of a Millennium Development Goal on Water and Sanitation Campaign in Nigeria
4. That the Federal, States and Local Governments adopt the bottom-up approach of project location and implementation and rejects the top-down approach which has led to project failure in the country so as to give adequate participation and ownership to the community people.
5. That we welcome the Presidential Water Initiative of the Federal Government and demand Civil Society participation in the process, community mobilization, project preparation, project monitoring and evaluation and sustainability plan.

ACTION PLAN

1. That a Network known as National Civil Society Network for Water and Sanitation is hereby established.

Secretariat

The National Secretariat shall be at ANEEJ Secretariat in Benin City to serve as a clearinghouse.

Structure: There shall be a National Steering Committee drawn from the 6 geopolitical zones headed by Rev. David Ugolor, President of ANEEJ. The other zonal coordinators are:

South South	-	Hope Ogbeide	-	SWAPHEP
South West	-	Akpan Anthony Johnson		PAVE
South East	-	Mrs. Ofong Ifey		WIDE
North East	-	Yakubu Zakaria		HBF
North Central	-	WaterAid Plateau		WATERAID

Ex-Officio

WaterAid

NEST

There shall be zonal and state offices and community cell units. There should be zonal meetings in the next one-month to elect their representative to the National Steering Committee.

Membership: All Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria

2. To organize a second phase NGO Consultative Conference to share experience/findings and develop road map
3. Launching of MDG on Water by March 2004
4. Research on Water and Sanitation in the six zone in Nigeria to develop a strong data base
5. Policy dialogue with government
6. Developing strong ICT base
7. Publication of Periodicals for contract watch on Water and Sanitation
8. To organize preliminary participatory meetings/workshops to sensitize and generate stakeholders opinion on water and sanitation.