



CASE STUDY

Benin: Promoting efficient and sustainable management of investment through improved governance and integrity in the water sector

Summary

Between August 2015 and June 2016, the Benin Country Water Partnership (CWP-Benin) facilitated the implementation of a charter for the governance of the water and sanitation sector. The initiative has gradually built a framework for multi-stakeholder dialogue on both the efficiency and sustainability of investments and on taking into account the concerns of the population for good governance in this sector.

Background

Starting in 2009, CWP-Benin has implemented various projects/programs that promote integrity in the water sector, in collaboration with Technical and Financial Partners including the Water Integrity Network (WIN), GIZ, SNV and the Dutch Embassy in Benin. This interest in integrity stems from a lesson learned from its interventions during the period 2004-2008: the efficiency and sustainability of investments in the water sector, including in the implementation of IWRM, requires a real consideration of the principles of accountability and transparency as well as quality stakeholder participation.

In 2009, in the Benin Blue Book, stakeholders recommended, among other things, «the promotion of a culture and mechanisms of good governance at the local and national levels, with the strengthening of the accountability of municipalities and the inclusion of civil society». Other problems have been attributed to weaknesses related to governance: during the 2012 annual review, stakeholders noted a significant drop in the budget consumption rate for the rural water sub-sector (from 90% in 2002 to 68% in 2007 and then to 35% in 2010) and, over the same period, a doubling of allocations, while only 61.5% of Benin's population had access to drinking water in December 2011, with large regional disparities. These problems were also highlighted by the results of the Annotated Water Integrity Assessment (EAIE) of the rural drinking water supply sub-sector conducted in 2011.

Furthermore, at the strategic level, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) related to water, Benin has made access to water and sanitation a priority in the 2011-2015 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). According to this document, stakeholders are aware of the governance deficit and its negative impact on access to water and on the sustainability of water and sanitation investments and services.

Despite the existence of a well developed legal and institutional arsenal, Benin is still confronted with cases of corruption in all sectors, including the water sector.

Faced with this situation, as a platform of public and private actors in the water sector, CWP-Benin has made support for the promotion of integrity a key focus of its interventions. In the first phase (2009-2013), CWP-Benin carried out actions including:

- the organization of a training workshop for Francophone trainers from West Africa on the understanding and application of the EAIE integrity diagnostic tool;
- the application of this tool to the rural water supply sub-sector;
- sensitization of 27 media and CSO representatives on integrity in the drinking water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

In 2015, the occurrence of the financial scandal related to the Multi-Year Water and Sanitation Program (PPEA 260) financed by the Netherlands strengthened the will of the CWP-Benin to establish a mechanism and a dynamic that engages the actors and allows for periodic evaluation of the efforts of the parties.

Actions taken

Strategically, the CWP-Benin decided in 2009 to make integrity a major issue in the water sector through program and project interventions as well as in sector practices. It targeted the following areas of action: developing knowledge of integrity risks, strengthening national and local capacities in terms of integrity, and setting up an alert and integrity promotion mechanism. This last axis, a pillar of the interventions, led to the development of a charter for governance. The aim was to have a mechanism that would influence accountability practices. To implement this charter, CWP-Benin chose to raise awareness of the concept of integrity and its principles through information and training activities as well as by questioning weaknesses in governance during sector meetings. These interventions were coordinated by CWP-Benin on the basis of consultations with stakeholder representatives, after the participation of a Beninese delegation composed of stakeholders (administration, NGOs, CSOs, private sector) in a regional training on integrity organized by WIN in 2013.

The process of developing the charter was facilitated by CWP-Benin and funded by WIN as part of the multiyear program to promote integrity in the water sector. CWP-Benin initiated and facilitated this process thanks to its experience and the responsibilities it was entrusted with: chairing the Consultation Framework for Non-State Actors in the Water and Sanitation Sector (CANEA), conducting advocacy actions involving all categories of actors, successfully coordinating national initiatives in collaboration with the Ministry of Water (drafting the Benin Blue Book in 2009, national multi-stakeholder consultation in preparation for the 6th World Water Forum 2012, etc.) and alliances with CSOs (Front of National Anti-Corruption Organizations, National Authority for the Fight against Corruption and Association for the Fight against Racism, Ethnocentrism and Regionalism). CWP-Benin has been co-leading a national coalition on integrity since 2009. In its advocacy efforts with the authorities and donors for their adherence to the charter, CWP-Benin has benefited from the support of GWP-WA with the participation of its Chair in the audience granted by the Minister of Water in 2016, in the presence of the representative of WIN.

The charter for the governance of the water and sanitation sector in Benin, an eleven-page

document, details the fundamental values that govern the management of the sector, including equity, a high sense of responsibility, integrity and justice. Through this charter, the different categories of actors commit themselves, according to their respective levels of responsibility, to ensure a rational and equitable distribution of water access infrastructures and sanitation facilities, to encourage community participation in planning and monitoring, and to systematize accountability, as well as to clean up the management system for public contracts and the delegation of public

services in the water and sanitation sector.

The key outcomes of the governance and integrity initiative are :

- the existence of a charter for governance recognized by the actors and now used as a tool for dialogue on integrity at national and local levels;
- the existence of a mechanism for operationalizing the charter, recognized and accepted by all categories of actors;
- awareness of possible solutions or actions to address governance problems by the actors who participated in the development of the charter;
- the formulation, through the charter, of commitments made by the categories of actors for better governance;
- the strengthening of the consideration of integrity by GIZ and the Dutch Embassy in projects/programs and interventions in the water and sanitation sector.

Outcomes

In 2016-2017, following the evaluation of the National Integrity System (NIS) in Benin coordinated by Transparency International with the NGO ALCRER, the government instructed all ministries to adopt action plans to promote integrity. The Ministry of Water drew on the experience gained from the participation of its executives in the development of the charter and the CWP-Benin to develop its action plan in 2019. The development of this action plan by the Ministry of Hygiene and Sanitation, which began in 2020, was interrupted by the Covid-19 crisis. By the end of 2020, three Ministries including Water had an action plan.

In 2019 and 2020, CWP-Benin worked to popularize the charter and to accompany the communes in its operationalization. Of the 77 communes in Benin, about ten have signed the charter and most now have their action plan, produced with technical support from CWP-Benin and financial support from GIZ or the Omidelta/Netherlands Embassy Program.

Advocacy with the donors has led to the mobilization of financial support, in particular the financing of the popularization and operationalization of the charter in the PROSEHA intervention communes by GIZ in collaboration with CWP-Benin and the integration of the governance component into the Omidelta Water-Sanitation Program (2016-2020) by the Netherlands Embassy.

The approval of the charter during the 2016 annual sector review makes it an instrument for dialogue on integrity in the sector, whose monitoring and evaluation of implementation can be decided at the highest level of the water and sanitation sector. Each actor can self-assess and report on its level of integrity, efficiency in resource management and sustainability of investments. The implementation of the charter was recommended during the 1st National Forum on Integrity in the Water and Sanitation Sector (FoNIEAu) in which

the GWP-WA Executive Secretary participated in 2019.

The participatory approach adopted by the CWP-Benin has allowed for good ownership of the various products, particularly the EAIE, by the members of the working groups and their commitment to the success of the process. They are the ones who facilitated the various validation sessions of the charter. Another effect is the improvement in the level of knowledge of the actors who participated in the process about the concept of integrity and its principles, which facilitated other actions undertaken subsequently by CWP-Benin.

The study on integrity risk mapping, conducted in 2017, explored possible obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and particularly SDG 6 («ensure access to water and sanitation for all and ensure sustainable management of water resources »). The results obtained in the four sub-sectors covered (urban drinking water, urban sanitation, rural drinking water and irrigation) revealed risks of corruption or integrity violations throughout the water and sanitation utility delivery chain: in the planning, programming, financing, procurement, construction and supervision processes, and in the operation and maintenance of facilities. The study makes strategic and operational recommendations, including the one on water pricing. In this regard, a process of revision of the tariff system has been initiated with the realization of studies in urban and rural areas.

Since 2016, the National Water Institute (INE) has had Teaching Units (UE) on governance and integrity in the water and sanitation sector at the bachelor and master levels. They already existed in the Water for Agriculture and Society (EAS) department and are to be extended to other departments and to the Center for Continuing Professional Education in Water (CFPC-Eau) where a master's degree in governance and management of water resources opened in 2020.

Lessons Learned

Integrity can contribute to improve water governance and entry points (training, baseline study or diagnosis, self-assessment) are essential factors for mobilization as well as a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to achieving sustainable results. Making an inventory to analyse existing charters in other sectors was key to getting the GSEA to agree to the charter with committed actors.

Benin's experience shows that it is possible to talk about integrity and make progress in promoting it for the benefit of improved governance. Also crucial to have commitment of actors to improve the integrity throughout whole process.

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Partnership action for water security and climate resilience of populations and ecosystems in West Africa

Related IWRM Tools

Water Integrity and Anti-corruption, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

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