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World Bank in \$200m Lagos, Cross River water schemes

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Infrastructure

THE World Bank Board of Executive Directors has approved an International Development Association credit of US\$200million to support the Federal Government of Nigeria in increasing the supply of potable water to the inhabitants of Lagos

and Cross River states.

The credit is provided on standard International Development Association terms, with a commitment fee of 0.35 per cent, a service charge of 0.75 per cent over a 40-year period of maturity, which includes a 15-year grace pe-

riod.

The "Second National Urban Water Sector Reform" project's principal development objectives are to: improve reliability of water supply produced by the water treatment works in Lagos, in order to increase capacity and hours of operation; increase access to piped water net-

works in four cities in Cross River State; and improve efficiency in order to reduce the cost of urban water utilities in both states.

"The project will vastly improve the amount of water available to consumers in Lagos and the cities of Calabar, Ikom, Ogoja and Obudu in Cross River State",

said Alexander McPhail, the World Bank's Task Team Leader for the project.

"For example, it will rehabilitate the treatment works and five distribution zones in Lagos and add 50,000 new water connections in Cross River State Capacity building is also an important project objective, where over US\$2.0 million will be earmarked for training and core technical assistance for the two utilities," he added.

The project has four components. The first, "Rehabilitation and Network Expansion" (75 per cent of the total project costs), will help support new works and equipment to ensure that the water utility customers receive increased access and more dependable delivery.

The second component, "Public-Private Partnership Development" (four per cent of the total project cost), will support the sector's ongoing

public-private partnership development, with the objective of an enhanced customer focus and commercial orientation in the Lagos State Water Corporation and Cross River State Water Board.

The third component, "Service Sustainability" (eight per cent of the total project cost), will complement the technical and operating improvements to facilitate self-sustainability, increased efficiency and improved reliability of water supply.

The fourth component, "Institutional Development and Policy Reform" (three per cent of the total cost), will strengthen the key sector skills, including technical operations, commercial operations, regulation, plus river basin development, and also track Nigeria's progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals for access to potable water and improved sanitation.

'...project will impede attainment of MDGs'

THE Civil Society Coalition Against Water Privatisation in Nigeria (or CISCAPW NIGERIA), an alliance of community-based and non-governmental organisations campaigning against water privatisation schemes in Nigeria, having critically examined the on going 2nd National Urban Water Sector Reform Project to be financed with a \$22million World Bank loan, notes that the project involves privatisation and commodification of the delivery of water and sanitation services in Lagos and Cross River states.

The project is not inclusive, open, transparent and participatory. So far, the policy has been vigorously pursued by the Federal Government and state governments with the support of the World Bank without due consultation, discussion, or approval by grassroots organisations that rep-

Activist BABATOPE BABALOBİ frowns at the scheme, arguing that the project possess the tendency to be counter-productive

resent the citizenry.

Beside seeking to relinquish all control over water resources to the private sector through commercialisation and commodification of water, the report of the Environmental Impact Assessment (if already conducted) on the Category B project has not been publicly published as required by law and the World Bank operations policies.

Access to safe water is a universally a basic human right and is essential to human life. Nigerians, particularly the peoples of Lagos and Cross River states, must control water as a public trust and an inalienable human right. Furthermore, projects intended to develop water re-

sources in the country must be based on respect for the rights of all citizens and must provide full and meaningful participation in decision-making.

The National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy in Nigeria states that the national policy is to guarantee free access for the poor for the "basic human need" level of water supply and sanitation.

But it seems that the project will impede the attainment of the MDG of halving by 2015, Nigerians without access to water and sanitation services.

The concerned governments, as the primary duty bearer, must take concrete steps to respect, protect and fulfill the citizen's right to water.

Furthermore, while removing all conditions that require public/private partnerships in order to permit the Nigerian government access to loan resources the World Bank needs to strengthen the role of the public sector and meaningful participation of civil society and affected communities; and not undermine it.

