

Report on the 2nd Water and Sanitation Roundtable organized by The Bread of Life Development Foundation in partnership with the Development Information Network (DEVNET). November 29, 2006. Lagos, Nigeria

The Bread of Life Development Foundation (BLF) in partnership with Development Information Network (DEVNET) organized the second in the series of Water and Sanitation roundtable in Lagos, yesterday, November 28, 2006.

This event was convened specifically to review the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme report 2006 titled "Meeting the MDG drinking water and sanitation target: the Urban and rural challenge of the decade"; and also the UNDP Human Development Index report 2006 titled the "Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis".

Representatives of Community groups, and non-governmental organizations attended the roundtable. An official of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), and the Lagos state water company also made presentations. Participants generally reviews the two reports and discussed the relevance of its findings within the Nigerian water and sanitation context.:

1. Participants commend the initiative of the UNICEF and the UNDP in producing the reports, which have drawn global attention to the strategic role of water and sanitation in developing the human potential, and also the failure of most national governments to effectively harness and efficiently manage this resource for the poor.
- √2. Participants fully welcome the UNDP's support for the human right to water and the provision of a minimum target of 20 litres of clean water a day for every citizen- and at no cost for those too poor to pay. We call for a review of the Nigerian national policy on water and sanitation to reflect this, and for legislative and political action to advance, protect and guarantee this right.
3. Participants noted that there is a strong linkage between developing the water and sanitation sector, and the achievement of all the other MDG goals and targets. The extend to which other

goals are achieved will be precipitated by the extent which the water and sanitation sector is developed. It is therefore of paramount importance for the Nigerian tiers of government to accord topmost priority to developing the water and sanitation sector.

4. Participants observed that both the UNICEF and UNDP reports confirm that Nigeria and many other sub Saharan countries are off track in achieving the MDG water and sanitation target. According to the UNICEF report, drinking water coverage in Nigeria fell from 49% in 1990 to 48% in 2004 whereas coverage of 65% by 2004 is required to achieve the MDG. In the same vein, sanitation coverage, though rising from 39% in 1990 to 44% in 2004; a coverage of 58% is required in 2004 would have put Nigeria on track. The UNDP report also states that *“on current levels sub Saharan African will reach the water target in 2040 and the sanitation target in 2076”*.
- ✓ 5. We believe this scenario indicates that the Nigeria state and its institutions have failed in its responsibility of delivering this essential service to the people. We therefore urged President Olusegun Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in the water and sanitation sector and also convene a National dialogue on deplorable state of Water and Sanitation sector in Nigeria as a step towards coming up with policies and programmes to redress this backward trend.
- ✓ 6. Participants endorse whole heartily the UNDP recommendations that tough ⁽¹⁶⁾ public financing holds the key to overcoming deficits in water and sanitation, ⁽²²⁾ and that in countries with high levels of poverty among unserved populations, public finance is a requirement for extended access”. We therefore called on the Nigerian government to roll back its privatization agenda in the water and sanitation sector.
- ✓ 7. Participants noted that International bodies such as the UNDP and the UNICEF seems to be more informed on the state of water resources in Nigeria, than Nigeria government agencies at all levels. Participants therefore tasked the Nigerian government at the Federal, State and Federal levels to undertake local situation assessment studies and come up with reports similar reports that indicate the state of access to water and sanitation by citizens in all parts of the country, the state of water resources infrastructure-both in terms of quality and quantity, and programmes/policies that lead to be implemented at all levels over the years..

- 8. Participants noted that as a result of lack of data on water resources in Nigeria, development efforts in the water and sanitation sector in Nigeria are haphazard and unplanned.**
- 9. Participants urged all stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector to focus more efforts on the majority population of citizens in rural areas who are unserved, and unheard.**
- 10. Participants observed the absence of a water policy in almost all the 36 States in the country. They therefore urged all affected state government to initiate an inclusive and participatory process of developing water policy (as a step down of the National Policy on water and sanitation); and this should be further stepped down to local government levels.**

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