

Memo to the Honourable Minister for Water Resources: 10 ways to increase access to safe drinking water for all Nigerians

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1. Support State Water Utilities to develop alternative/independent Power supply (IPP) for their waterworks/water schemes. Epileptic energy supply is their No 1 problem. Support state to finance the development of small scale hydro power projects/gas turbines. There is not state that does not have a river course which can be dammed for the generation of 5-20 MWs of power which will power the water works. Some few states also have access to Gas pipelines.
2. Fight Corruption in the sector. Direct all Water practitioners and sector bodies to adopt the principles and practices of the Water Integrity Network- a global movement promoting accountability, transparency and accountability in the awards of contracts, procurement, payment of water bills by consumers etc
3. Encourage States to implement water sector reform programmes encompassing Policy, Regulatory and Legal frameworks- Every State should develop a Water Supply and Sanitation Policy, Develop a State wide Water Supply and Sanitation law, Set up a Water Supply and Sanitation Regulatory Commission, Create a Ministry for Water Resources, A Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (where necessary), and a Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency. Also LGAs should create Depts. of Water supply and Sanitation and allocate funds to implement projects. Also Medium Term Sector Strategies and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (including an Investment Plan) should be developed at the Federal level and in all state agencies.
4. Lobby the National Assembly and Private sector to push more funds to the sector. Support the organisations of Awards to recognise private sector firms that are supporting the sector as a form of social responsibility.
5. Encourage States to turn State Water Utilities into Corporatised utilities operating as Commercial bodies. Water Corporations should be taken away from the Civil Service and managed as Independent, autonomous bodies. The management should be recruited on time based contract and given performance targets. Tariffs should in the minimum cover operation and maintenance costs. Water tariffs are generally low in Nigeria.

Governments at all levels should prioritise Water Supply and push more funds to the sector. Federal Government should allocate fund for rehabilitation and expansion of state water schemes.

At the Federal level, the National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy should be reviewed and the National Water Resources draft bill reviewed and passed into law.

Make implementation of Water reform programmes by states a condition for Federal Government support to their water sector programmes.

6. Declare a National Emergency in the Sector and state your government commitment to make access to 30 litres of safe water per day, within 250 metres a right of every Nigerian. Declare access to safe water a human right. The de merging of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Federal Ministry of Water Resources is commendable.
7. In rural areas, Household water treatment should be encouraged and popularised to ensure point of use water treatment. Low costs Technologies for Household water treatment that can be promoted include filtration and boiling. Launch a National Campaign for Household water treatment to prevent future preventable deaths through water borne diseases- guinea worm, cholera etc. Facilitate High profile Hand Washing campaigns. Make policy statements that all Government and private offices, all schools and public places should construct toilet facilities that also meets the needs of the disabled. Work with paramilitary organisations to enforce this.
8. Make policy procurement that all communities in Nigeria to establish a Water Supply and Sanitation Committee (WASHCOMs), and all Small Towns in Nigeria to establish Water Consumer Associations (WCAs). All Community Development Associations/Town Unions in Urban areas to establish Water Committees. These will serve as platforms for improved water governance as well as mobilise communities to part finance water and sanitation projects.
9. Facilitate the formation of Water Vendors Association at Federal level and at State levels. Private vendors supply water to majority of Nigerians in urban areas. Government should support their operations through access to soft loans. Government through appropriate agencies also need to regulate their activities to ensure fair pricing and good water quality.

10. Create National awareness of Rain Water Harvesting and its techniques- this will ensure all year round availability of water where there is scarcity and seasonal variability of rainfall.

11. Appoint professionals not politicians to manage the sector. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources had to be reorganised to weed off dead woods and bring in competent hands. The National Water Resources Institute in Kaduna must be empowered to train more professionals in the sector- to degree level. At the state level, the Board of the Water Utilities must be managed by professionals not politicians.

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