

## **Benin**

### ***The Challenge:***

Poverty reduction remains a central challenge in Benin. Rural water supply has been prioritized by the government and support partners. Coverage in rural areas is 53%, higher than many African countries and although the prospects for sustainability appear better than in the rest of Africa, this is not assured. Supply chains for parts and services are weak and unreliable. A coherent sector financing strategy needs to be developed in the context of the MDG challenge. At 20%, the sanitation coverage is significantly below the African average and the sanitation and hygiene sector also needs significant support. However, severe capacity constraints limit the potential for scaled up progress toward the WSS/MDGs.

Such capacity would have to be built up under the recently implemented policy for the decentralization of services to municipalities which, although endowed with appropriate legal powers, do not have the necessary capacity and experience. Far-reaching reforms in urban WSS have been initiated by the unbundling of water and electricity into separate utilities. The newly established SONEB (Société Nationale des Eaux du Benin) also needs support. WSP-AF has developed a fruitful and long-standing collaboration with lead sector agencies and with Benin's development partners involved in WSS, in particular DANIDA, GTZ, DGDC, and the World Bank (AFTU2). WSP-AF support has so far been focused on the development and subsequent updating of the RWSS strategy and to the full integration of WSS in the PRSP. The Government of Benin (GoB) has requested WSP-AF to maintain its engagement in RWSS and to extend its support to urban water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

### ***The Opportunities:***

The challenge of the MDGs requires an acceleration of the coverage of both sanitation and water supply. The GoB is developing an MDG action plan under the framework of the PRSP process. The main opportunities for sector engagement and scaling up are:

- The PRSP constitutes the proper framework to prioritize scaling up strategies and opening the way for the adoption of programmatic approaches.
- The acceleration of administrative decentralization, which would require a coherent strategy for large scale capacity building and knowledge transfer from central institutions to local governments.
- The endorsement of the MDGs offers the opportunity to raise the profile of the sector, especially for sanitation.
- The development of a National Hand Washing Initiative will improve the hygiene and impact positively on the mortality of children.
- A growing consensus by sector stakeholders on key sector priority issues will facilitate coordination.

### ***WSP-AF's Role:***

WSP-AF has been operational in Benin for more than 10 years, mainly in investment support for rural water development. Since 2004, WSP-AF has established a country presence to strengthen its role in sector support. The focus of WSP support will continue to be on helping Benin:

- To implement a strategy to reach the MDGs, specifically focusing on the rural water sector.
- To develop with the other donors an urban WSS strategy.

- To develop and implement a communication action plan for the RWS sector.
- To develop and implement a RWS maintenance project pilot.
- To develop a National Hand Washing Initiative.

WSP-AF has consolidated its support to this focus country through appointing a dedicated sector expert based in the Benin World Bank office.

***WSP-AF's Comparative Advantage:***

WSP-AF has developed a close and consistent partnership with the World Bank's Water and Urban Unit - West Africa (AFTU2), Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danida), German Development Agency (GTZ), and the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC), supporting the development of the RWSS sector through its lead ministry and has led the support for Benin's sector strategies. WSP-AF's work on WSS in PRSP initiatives and support for programmatic approaches has created interest from the GoB and increased demand for WSP-AF support.

***WSP-AF's Activity Selection:***

During FY07, WSP-AF will focus its operations in four areas:

1. Completion of WSS MDG strategy and action plan
2. Development of effective WSS MDG M&E, including sector coordination and leadership improvement
3. Development of a National Hand Washing Initiative
4. Development of sustainable financing systems for increased WSS investment and maintenance for WSS sector