

Project Information

- **Country:** Nigeria
- **Project Name:** The Project for Improvement of Rural Water Supply (Grant Aid)
- **Cooperation Period:** 2012 - 2014
- **Implementing Organization:** Federal Ministry of Water Resources

1. Water Situation in Africa from the Gender Perspective

In most countries of Africa, women and girls shoulder over 90% of the responsibility of fetching water. In addition, the mean time to the source of drinking water in rural areas of Nigeria, excluding those with water within a village, is 30 minutes. Water collection takes a huge amount of time, time that could be better used for other purposes such as productive activities and education. Women have been the users and managers of water in and outside of the household, and have accumulated knowledge and experience. In spite of their knowledge and experience, women's decision making power on utilization and means of management of natural resources is limited by traditional values and customs. The lack of women's participation in deciding on the locations and types of water facilities leads to missed opportunities to sustainably provide safe drinking water.

2. The Impacts of Water Supply Projects from the Gender Perspective

From interviews with people in the target villages, it was confirmed that water fetching time has lessened since the JICA projects on construction and maintenance of water supply facilities, i.e. wells, in Africa. In most cases, it is time spent by women and girls. As a result of the reduced water fetching time, there was a project that showed an increased enrollment rate of girls in school by increasing the children's time to attend school. Additionally, there were interviews that showed that women's economic activities for cash income, i.e. vegetable gardens and/or handicrafts, have become more active after the reduction of water fetching activities.

3. Background and Project Summary

In Nigeria, the ratio of people with access to safe water declined from 49% in 1990 to 48% in 2004 due to factors such as population increase, etc. The ratio is especially low in rural areas at 31% compared to 68% in the cities. There is an urgent need to secure safe water supplies because many people drink surface water and puddle water with the risk of water-borne diseases.

With this situation in mind, the Project for Improvement of Rural Water Supply, covering five States, Kebbi, Niger, Taraba, Ondo and Enugu, provided equipment for borehole construction. At the same time, technical support was provided for the formulation of a borehole construction plan, data

management and equipment maintenance, as well as strengthening of the operation and maintenance systems of rural water supply facilities. 500 water supply facilities with hand pump boreholes will be constructed in two years after the procurement of equipment and materials by the Project, and safe water will be provided to 132,000 persons in the Project area from the constructed boreholes.

4. Gender-responsive Activities

Regarding the water sector in Africa, the gender-responsive approach has been taken in the establishment of Gender and Human Rights Unit in the Federal Ministry of Water Resources in Nigeria based on "AMCOW (the African Minister's Council on Water) Policy and Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in Water Sector in Africa."

In the Project, model villages have been selected to support the establishment of WASHCOM (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene



Committee) as a part of the technical support for strengthening of the operation and maintenance systems of rural water supply facilities. The WASHCOM is in charge of daily operations and maintenance of the water supply facility as well as management of a maintenance fund for purchasing the parts of a hand pump.

The Project promoted women's participation given the current situation that women play an important role in water fetching as well as following the strategy of the Nigerian government. Of the approximately 10 members of the WASHCOM, four to five members should be women. While the degree of women's participation varies by area in Nigeria, there is a Muslim village where women's opportunities to participate in community activities are quite limited. In this village, women are included as WASHCOM members with the approach from the Project.

Within the members of the committee, women are preferred as Hand Pump Care Takers of hand pumps as they stay in the village longer than men who go out for work. For example, if a care taker is a woman who fetches water, she can arrange for repair of the pump quickly. Additionally, there are cases where a woman is preferred as a treasurer.

Through participation by both men and women, water supply activities can be made sustainable and more effective. Furthermore, women's voices in communities are strengthened through participation in water resources management.