



An Interview with

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**WSSCC:** *Nigeria, as many other Sub-Saharan African Countries, is not on track to reach the Sanitation and Water MDG, what are, according to you, the key challenges to be addressed in order to put this country and region back on track?*

**EO:** **Institutional responsibilities:** The issue of providing Water Supply and Sanitation is the responsibility of the 3 tiers (Federal, States and the Local) of Government and the benefiting communities. This is as per the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Nigeria Water Supply and Sanitation Policy of 2000. Unfortunately, the LGAs (Local Government Authorities) and States have neglected sanitation. Hence, there is a need to sensitize the policy makers in the States and LGAs, especially the State Governors and LGA Chairmen. This would be achieved through mobilization and advocacy visits.

An example of a similar experience can be drawn from the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme in Nigeria. In 1988, at the inception of the programme, about 653,620 cases of Guinea worm disease were identified in 5,789 villages nationwide. The eradication programme was still problematic until the Carter Centre contracted the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon using the Yakubu Gowon Centre as a resource. A formidable team was set up between line Ministries (Federal Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Water Resources, and Information) External Support Agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP) and NGOs (Carter Centre and Yakubu Gowon Centre), who led advocacy and mobilization visits to Governors and Chairmen of affected States and LGAs respectively. These Governors and the LGA Chairmen immediately assisted in creating the required infrastructure without necessarily waiting for the Federal Government to do it alone. With this approach, the Guinea worm has been eradicated in Nigeria.

It is therefore necessary that a similar aggressive approach can be used for sanitation. The Women Leaders for WASH, through the assistance of the WSSCC can be successful, using advocacy and mobilization visits in order to put the country and the region back on track.

**Capacity Building:** Presently there is low capacity of staff to carry out WASH activities in the LGAs. There is the need to train LGA staff who would in turn train selected members of the communities.

**Creating Coordinating Bodies:** Currently, there is a coordinating group on Sanitation in Nigeria called the "National Task Group on Sanitation" consisting of line ministries (such as Federal Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources, Environment, Health, Education, and Information; the National Orientation Agency and UNICEF). This Group meets to discuss and take action on Sanitation activities with its Secretariat in the Water Supply and Quality Control Department of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources. In line with the

above structure, there is the need to set up similar structures at the State levels in order to reduce duplication of efforts in sanitation activities.

**Technology Decisions:** There is the need to provide low cost water supply and sanitation options such as CLTS (Community Led Total Sanitation), Sanplat latrines, and improved traditional pit latrines, etc. for sanitation and improved protected streams and springs, protected hand dug wells, etc. for water supply.

**Funding:** Often the Funding for Sanitation is very poor. There is the need for Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to be sensitized as to the health benefits of proper sanitation. Also the need for the WSSCC to garner funding through the international arena for improved sanitation mandates. Additionally, monitoring of WASH in Nigeria is still poor resulting in obtaining conflicting figures and reports.

**WSSCC:** *Women Leaders for WASH is in essence an effort to increase leadership for the sector, what kind of role can such an initiative play according to you?*

- EO:** The role of women's leadership will be through Advocacy, in the following ways:
- Mobilize the committees especially the women and children
  - Mobilize the decision makers at all levels of Government in order to raise the political will thereby attract more funds into the sub-sector
  - Attract and Involve professionals in improving the sub-sector
  - Raise awareness at schools and tertiary institutions

**WSSCC:** *How do you see the role of women in positively contributing to sustainable sanitation schemes?*

- EO:** The role of women will positively contribute tremendously to sustainable sanitation programmes, since the duty of providing water and sanitation in the household is one of the primary responsibilities of the women and children, especially the female children. In the rural areas, they waste many productive hours fetching water to enable them to maintain minimum hygiene/sanitation.

**WSSCC:** *The International Year of 2008 has created momentum for sanitation. What needs to be done in terms of advocacy to maintain the current spotlight on the issue?*

- EO:** In terms of advocacy, there is the need to reach out to the decision and policy makers in the three tiers of Government (Federal, 36 States/FCT and the 774 LGAs), the Ministers, the Permanent Secretaries, the State Governors the LGA Chairmen; and also it is necessary to create awareness amongst the entire populations using leaflets, radio programs, TV advertising, and town hall meetings.