

Forum:Economic and Social Council

Issue: *Addressing the issue of lack of water and its consequence on human health in Nigeria*  
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1. **Introduction**

Water is an essential resource for life and good health. Lack of water to meet daily needs is a reality today for one in three people around the world. Especially in Nigeria, which is the most densely populated country in Africa. Poor access to improved water and sanitation in Nigeria remains a major contributing factor to high morbidity and mortality rates among children under five, leading to children using contaminated water sources and poor sanitary conditions increasing the vulnerability to water-borne diseases, including diarrhea as approximately only 26.5% of the population uses improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities which has caused an annual death rate of 70,000 children. Although, Nigeria has 215 cubic kilometers a year of available surface water, which is a lot higher than in many African countries, the country suffers from “economic water scarcity” the inability to properly manage, use and protect water resources for socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability.

Although, there have been successful efforts to provide water supply to majority of the population,  fewer than three in ten people still have a decent toilet, the country has a big task ahead of it to install the right sanitation systems, having also highly impacting the large-scale country’s economy, the country will be required to triple its budget or at least allocate 1.7 per cent of the current Gross Domestic Product to WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygeine). Overall, water scarcity in Nigeria is estimated to cost Nigeria about USD$1.3 billion in access time, loss due to premature death, productive time lost and health care costs.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

**Water Scarcity**

Refers to the lack of sufficient water sources available to meet the needs of water usage within a population or region, which can have a significantly large-scale impact on the health, economy and even population growth of a given country it could eventually lead into a pandemic. Nigeria is one of the countries which suffers severe water scarcity and economic water scarcity in particular, where only 19% of Nigeria's population has access to safe drinking water which has greatly impacted many key factors of the country.

**Economic Water Scarcity**

A type of water scarcity caused by the lack of investment in water infrastructure or insufficient human capacity to satisfy the water demands of a population which cannot afford to use an adequate source of water.

**Human Health**

The state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease, it is considered the social factor of the lives of individuals. Water scarcity in Nigeria has various effects on the human health of its population, including the spread of water-borne diseases, diarrhea and many others.

**Poor Sanitation**

Refers to public health conditions related to clean drinking water and adequate treatment and disposal of human excreta and sewage. Lack of access of water in Nigeria results to poor sanitation, including poor access to clean drinking water and lack of access to toilets, which has various negative impacts on the human health.

**Contaminated Water Supply**

It is considered a vehicle for transmitting disease, it is considered polluted water, any behavior, custom or process which brings pathogens found in human feces into contact. Majority of the water supply to the population of Nigeria is contaminated as a result of pollution which results to human health complications.

**WASH**

Wash stands for water, sanitation and hygiene it is a universal, affordable and sustainable access to WASH is a key public health issue within international development. In regards to water scarcity in Nigeria, the government has dedicated its budgeting allocation to WASH.

1. **General Overview – Background information**

General Information

Nigeria is one of the most popular countries in Africa, having the largest population of all countries of the continent, standing as the 8th most populated country in the world with a population of approximately 145 million individuals.

During the oil boom days in the 1970s 1980s the country highly invested in the development of the water resource and the construction of dams to control floods, provision of water for domestic and industrial purposes and the environment hydro-power generation. However, ever since 2015 water scarcity became a growing issue greatly impacting different sectors of the country until today and is the leading cause to high morbidity and mortality rate amongst children under the age of 5. In Nigeria, water management is controlled by the federal government, where state governments re responsible to supply urban areas with water through state water agencies and local governments along with communities are in-charge of rural water supply. In 1979 a Kaduna (a city in Northwest Nigeria) established the National Water Resource Institute to work on the improvement of manpower supply for the water resource sector, preceding this in 1976 was the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMoWR) with the mandate of developing and implementing programs, policies and projectsto lubricate sustainable access to safe and adequate water to meet the cultural, economic development, environmental and social needs of the Nigerians. This establishment has 12 River Basin Development Authrorities under the Ministry, responsible for developing and planning irrigation work, water resources and hydrological data collection.

The National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy in Nigeria was approved in 2000 where it encouraged private-sector participation, although not much happened. Other efforts were also implemented to increase water coverage from 43% to 80% by 2010 and 100% by 2015, however, this was not met. In 2003, a Presidential Water Initiative: Water for People, Water for Life, was launched the initiative had ambitious targets to increase water access, however, little has been done to implement the initiative and targets have not been met. The National Water and Satiation Policy was also launched in 2004 which emphasized water management and conservation, yet, the country was not able to reach millennium Development Goal for water and sanitation.

Causes of water scarcity in Nigeria

Many individuals in Nigeria today suffer from insufficient water supply, this issue was introduced to the Nigerian community in 2013. Although, the country is fruitful in water resources where around 36 states present in Nigeria were named after rivers, the presence of surface water in all parts of the country where the country has 215 cubic kilometers of surface water available annually along with the adequate water supply stored underground. Majority of individuals around the global believe that Nigeria should have an adequate water supply to meet the demands of its population and many more. However, in reality only 19% of Nigeria’s population has access to [safe drinking water](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-2017/en/), majority of the population has access to a basic water supply which is distributed unevenly amongst the more and less developed regions in Nigeria where 67% of the population living in cities has access to basic water supply and 54% of those living in rural areas have access to basic water supply, however, this water supply is not considered safe for drinking it may be contaminated with pests leading to malnutrition and disease.

Therefore, the main reason behind the country’s suffering with a lack of adequate water supply with the presence of abundant resources is caused by the country’s inability to properly manage, use and protect the water resources that it has for social, economic and environmental purposes this refers to economic water scarcity, which is mainly due to the lack of education and the poverty of the country.

Other factors contribute to the water scarcity as well, this includes pollution. The pollution of the country’s natural water resources of rivers and streams as individuals use these resources to dump their wastes for example, the Niger Delta has been contaminated by oil exploration activities which declined fish harvest and led to a loss of biodiversity. Storm water in cities is also contaminated with pollutants and toxins which led to high levels of toxic chemicals including metals and pesticides in the water resources. Underground water is also polluted through seepage from waste dump sites. This causes the once known as safe water supplies to become dangerous and risk the health of the individuals and lead to diseases including typhoid, fever and diarrhea which has various impacts on the social, economic and even the environment in Nigeria.

Other causes, not being as important include climate change which has resulted to the evaporation of surface water including river or sea water, increasing population and an increase in the demand for food and cash crops along with water and hygiene, increasing urbanization and rising standards of living are also major factors leading to shortage in supply of freshwaters.

Consequences of this insufficient water supply on the health and hygiene of the individuals

Water and sanitation are the primary drivers of public health, access to potable water supply and sanitation are basic human needs which require to be satisfied in adequate quantities to meet minimum health standards. Modern day environmental sanitation also requires a great quantity of water for sewage and industrial waste in particular, which is required for welfare improvement.

Water scarcity in Nigeria mainly impacts the rural areas due to the use of polluted drinking water and a shortage of water for daily hygiene, as a result the poverty of the rural population which mainly receive low incomes and find it difficult to fund or maintain a water supply. This is also caused by the low percentage of people and the high population density. They also lack the skills required to maintain the water source. Therefore, the use of such contaminated and polluted water supplies has resulted in the development of Malaria a predominant disease affecting the population of Nigeria along with other diseases endemic throughout the country are generally associated with unsatisfactory drinking supply and poor sanitation conditions. Including diarrhea, dysentery gastro-enteritis, infectious hepatitis, guinea worm, scabies and other parasitic infections, with approximately 2 million children under the age of 5 dying every year from diarrhea and pneumonia related diseases.

A World Health Organization report reveals that, in Nigeria almost a third (29%) of hospitals and clinics do not have access to clean water and the same percentage do not have safe toilets while one in six (16%) do not have anywhere to wash hands with soap. The risk is high for babies and mothers in healthcare facilities that do not offer a hygienic birth environment and have inadequate WASH facilities. In Nigeria, one woman in every 23 will on average lose a baby to infection during her lifetime compared to one in 7,518 in the UK.

Consequences on the country’s economy

The ripples effects of the country’s weak health sanitation also have direct impact on the nation’s workforce as many people in the working class and children lose thousands of man/work hours to communicable diseases. Water scarcity results to decreased trade due to decreased agricultural produce and fewer manufactured products and will have to import greater amounts of each but at significantly higher prices. The country also needs to designate money to relieve the consequences of droughts and treat the water-borne diseases associated including diarrhea and other associated health-related problems.

Impact on the development of the country

Nigeria has a huge population and extremely rapid rural–urban migration. Economic development and urban planning have not kept pace with the sheer volumes of people arriving – and being born – every day in its towns and cities. The size, density and poverty of the urban population in Nigeria, combined with chronic governmental failure to provide sanitation services to slums, forces over 13 million of these urban dwellers to find anywhere they can to relieve themselves. As far as urban sanitation access goes, it is a case of one step forward, two steps back for Nigeria. For everyone urban dweller reached with sanitation since 2000, two people were added to the number living without.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund)**

UNICEF was originally created by the General assembly on 11 of December in 1946 to provide emergency, food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries who were devastated after WW2. However, this fund prolongs its assistance in supporting children on a global scale, it works in conflict countries to provide safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services through improving and repairing water systems, trucking water, setting up latrines and promoting awareness of hygiene practices. It is involved in helping Nigerian children in response to the water scarcity and increase their hygiene in particular. The fund is working to scale-up lifesaving responses, especially in IDP camps, to ensure quality and sustainability of WASH services and facilities, minimize the risk of WASH-related diseases, and to provide preventive measures against cholera and other water-borne diseases.

**The World Health Organization (WHO)**

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations which is concerned in international public health. The organization leads global efforts to prevent transmission of water-borne diseases as it advises governments to develop health-based targets and regulations. In response to the Nigerian water crisis since 2014, the organization has been testing household water treatment products against a health-based performance criterion through the to Evaluate Household Water Treatment Technologies. The aim of the scheme is to ensure that products protect users from the pathogens that cause diarrhoeal disease and to strengthen policy, regulatory, and monitoring mechanisms at the national level to support appropriate targeting and consistent and correct use of such products. In 2015 WHO and UNICEF also jointly developed WASH FIT (Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool), an adaptation of the water safety plan approach. WASH FIT aims to guide small, primary health care facilities in low- and middle-income settings through a continuous cycle of improvement through assessments, prioritization of risk, and definition of specific, targeted actions.

**WaterAid**

WaterAid is an organization which receives donations from the public and grants from governments to implement their projects in cooperation with, but not through the government. The organization helped the Nigerian government facilitate an emergency response to its water and sanitation crisis, the first phase of a National Action Plan addressing its state of emergency. It commences with an 18-month emergency plan, followed by a five-year recovery plan and a 13-year revitalization strategy, towards the 2030 deadline set by the UN Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty and create a healthier, more sustainable planet. It commits the Federal Government of Nigeria and states to establish the institutional and funding foundations for sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services, and to accelerate development towards 2030.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| 1970s/1980s | Nigerian government invests in water resource development (construction of multipurpose dams, provision of water for domestic and industrial uses) |
| 1979  1976  2000  2003  2004  2007  June 2016 | National Water Resources Institute is established in Kaduna, Nigeria. To improve the supply of manpower for the water resources sector.  The establishment of the Federal Ministry if Water Resources to develop and implement programs and policies to increase sustainable access to safe and adequate water  National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy approved used to encourage private-sector participation  Presidential Water Initiative: Water for People, Water for Life, launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo  National Water and Sanitation Policy emphasizing water management and conservation  Four out of 36 states introduce public private partnerships in the form of service contracts, incorporating the federal government’s decentralization policy  President Muhammadu Buhari approved a [Water Resources Roadmap (2016 – 2030)](http://wsssrp.org/event/fg-launches-water-resource-road-map/) with the goal of reaching 100% water supply to Nigerian citizens by 2030 |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

* **Recognizing Access to Clean Water, Sanitation as Human Right, 28 July 2010** (**GA/10967)** This resolution called upon States and International organizations to provide financial resources, relocate technology, build capacity for such efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all as a human right to water and sanitation. Particularly, after expressing deep concern due to the fact that 884 million people worldwide had no access to safe drinking water and above 2.6 billion lacked access to basic sanitation
* Solving global water crisis ‘moral imperative’, access to water human right, 21 April 2005 **(ENV/DEV/847) MEETING**
* **Human Rights Council Resolution 28 September 2011 A/HRC/RES/18/1** The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution which takes the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation a step further. The Council welcomed the submission of the compilation of good practices on the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. The resolution calls upon States to ensure enough financing for sustainable delivery of water and sanitation services.
* **World Health Assembly Resolution May 2011 64/24** through this resolution the WHO called upon all member states "to ensure that national health strategies contribute to the realization of water- and sanitation-related Millennium Development Goals while coming in support to the progressive realization of the human right to water and sanitation" and to WHO's Director General to "to strengthen WHO's collaboration with all relevant UN-Water members and partners, as well as other relevant organizations promoting access to safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene services, so as to set an example of effective intersectoral action in the context of WHO's involvement in the United Nations Delivering as One initiative, and WHO's cooperation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation with a view to improving the realization of the human right to water and Sanitation".
* **Appointment of an independent expert March 2008 resolution 7/22** the Human Rights Council decided "To appoint, for a period of three years, an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation".
* In the Abuja Declaration adopted at the First Africa-South America Summit (ASA) in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 2006, along with 64 other African and South American States committed to “promote the right of our citizens to have access to clean and safe water and sanitation within our respective jurisdictions.”
* At the 5th World Water Form in March 2009, Nigeria signed, along with 25 other countries, a declaration stating that. “We recognize that access to water and sanitation is a human right and we are committed to all necessary actions for the progressive implementation of this right.”
* **Unicef** is also involved in helping the government of Nigeria improve the health and social conditions of the Nigerian and the children in particular, supported the government with emergency responses and targeted its actions to ensure good nutrition for all Children in Nigeria.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In the UN’s resolution of recognizing access to Clean Water, Sanitation as Human Right and emphasizing this human right, which called upon states to and International organizations to provide financial resources, relocate technology, build capacity for such efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all as a human right to water and sanitation. The representative of Nigeria voted in-favor of this resolution, however, there was no relying evidence that the Nigeria had been provided with resources, relocate technology and build capacity to solve the Nigerian water crisis, particularly, because the resolution discussed clean water and sanitation as a human right in general and did not focus on Nigeria in particular also because water scarcity still exists as an issue in Nigeria. Many of the resolutions also only emphasize the access to water and sanitation as a human right in the international law and others further recognize this human right and elaborate on its importance. They do not by any means incorporate action plans or solutions which can be implemented to achieve the access of water and sanitation as a human right. Therefore, did not benefit the Nigerian community.

Various efforts other than those made by the UN have been implemented to help aid Nigeria and eliminate water scarcity within the country, many policies have been created to help solve the issue however, majority of these failed showing little or no help at all. An estimated $500 million of budgeted funds is annually sunk into the water sector though government claims $2.05 billion is the annual figure needed in investments to attain the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets. However, experts insist that the sector’s problems are less about availability of funds and more about mismanagement of resources and poor utilization of available finances.

Another major problem is that the country has adopted a “control and command” approach to water resource management. It focuses on engineering physical infrastructure and excludes other perspectives. This means that authorities managing water don’t sufficiently engage with the people using it. Infrastructure in communities tends to collapse when users aren’t involved in planning or running it. There has also been little coordination between federal, state and local government agencies.

The government itself has also undertaken various actions to increase the access of water amongst individuals, however, there has been coexisting loss in access as a result of desertification, pollution, hydrological extremes, urbanization and the lack of traditional indigenous knowledge which embraces greener approaches. For example, the Lake Chad in Nigeria is rapidly shrinking, threatening the resources and live hoods of approximately 50 million individuals living there. This calls for improved strategies to manage the country’s water resource and remediate the loses. Hopefully, the member of states during the conference will be capable of inventing reliable solutions to help those suffering from water-poverty health related circumstances and help eradicate water scarcity in Nigeria, allowing the Nigerian economy to build its way up recovering from the water loss it was subjected to in the past.

1. Possible Solutions

There are various solutions which could be implemented to solve the health, social and economic issues associated with water scarcity in Nigeria, including the country learning from pilot projects being implemented in similar contexts (like in Kenya) and conduct critical programmatic, social economic assessments of such through pilot replications with government support and leveraged finance.

Another solution includes declaring a state of emergency in the water and sanitation sector and a presidential taskforce set up and empowered to deliver on providing water and sanitation for all Nigerians, which can be done through the help and aid of international organizations such as UNICEF or WaterAid, or by raising money through campaigns and fundraising in foreign developed countries. Also, by mobilizing resources from taxes, tariffs and transfers, and increasing the amount and proportion of aid for water, sanitation and hygiene, to close the gaps in financing. This also means supporting institutions to ensure they are accountable and well-governed, so that money is well-spent, and promoting pro-poor policies that ensure access to water for everyone.

Another possible solution includes strengthening governmental efforts to eradicate the practice of open defecation. This could be done by raising awareness to the Nigerian citizens by educating them at school when they are young and creating health awareness groups for mothers about the consequences of this open defecation on their health and how the spread of bacteria could lead to various diseases and social consequences. These educational groups can be assisted by foreign educated individuals or certified doctors in the form of foreign aid.

1. Guiding Questions
2. What is equal distribution of water amongst all nations?
3. Why is equal distribution of water important?
4. How can equal water distribution be achieved?
5. Why is there unequal distribution of water around the globe?
6. What is considered a safe water supply?
7. What is a contaminated water supply?
8. What is water scarcity?
9. What are the different types of water scarcity?
10. How can unsafe water supply lead to consequences on human health?
11. How can an unsafe water supply result in economic recession within a specific country?
12. Appendices and useful links
13. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/10208557.pdf
14. <https://theconversation.com/how-nigeria-is-wasting-its-rich-water-resources-83110>
15. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.890.7994&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
16. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/ga10967.doc.htm>
17. <http://www.connecteddevelopment.org/1963-2/>
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