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# WEST AFRICA MUNICIPAL WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE ACTIVITY MUNIWASH

## CAPACITY ASSESSMENT - A KEY STEP IN THE PROCESS OF IMPROVING MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE

### SUMMARY

The USAID-funded Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project in West Africa (MuniWASH) is providing technical support to improve the governance and management of municipal water and sanitation

services in 16 target municipalities in Benin[1] and Côte d'Ivoire[2]. To serve as a reference framework for the municipal capacity building program, the USAID MuniWASH project provides these target municipalities with a governance tool called the *Institutional Strengthening Index (ISI)*.

This tool is deployed in a three-step process as follow:

1.   The municipalities self-assess their performance in providing Water and Sanitation services to their constituents.

2.   Based on the findings of these self-assessments, the municipalities develop strategic Institutional Strengthening Plans (ISPs) to fill the capacity gaps identified.

3.   Finally, the municipalities implement the ISPs for improved service performance.

During the assessment phase conducted in FY2021, the ISI identified deficiencies at the organizational and regulatory levels and in planning, citizen engagement, data management, and others. This learning note presents lessons learned during the initial application of the ISI in partner municipalities.

## INTRODUCTION

In February 1990, the *Conférence des Forces Vives de la Nation* defined the Government of Benin's plan to grant municipalities more legal and financial autonomy[3]. The Beninese government has strived to promote the transfer of its powers to local authorities by focusing on local development and grassroots democracy. Similarly, in Côte d'Ivoire, in accordance with the current legislation on the transfer and distribution of State authorities to local authorities[4], the management of public policies combines governance mechanisms with the guiding principles of transparency, accountability, and efficiency of public action and are driven by program budgets.

Good local governance significantly improves the performance of the organization and the satisfaction of citizens. It also brings administrators and citizens closer each other and reinforces the mutual trust. However, there are institutional, regulatory, technical, and financial shortcomings in the process of transferring powers from the central government to the local level. These deficiencies slow down local development and limit the capacity of the municipalities to provide effective and efficient services to citizens.

## INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING INDEX TOOL

ISI is a tool for assessing the organizational performance of an organization. It aims to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an organization through a scoring grid ranging from 1 to 4. Organizations are scored on their performance in key functional areas namely 1) Planning, Coordination and Cooperation; 2) Service Delivery; 3) Administration and Financial Management; 4) Human Resources Management, and 5) Monitoring and Use of Data. The results of the assessment are then used to formulate capacity building plans, or ISPs, to fill the gaps revealed by this assessment.

A score of 1 means that the capability being assessed is very weak and a lot of support is needed to improve this ability. A score of 4 indicates a proficient capability, and no additional support is required for improvement. Each of the five functions corresponds to five capabilities for municipalities to develop. The

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[1] Target municipalities in Benin: Abomey-Calavi, Allada, Aplahoué, Avrankou, Cotonou, Bohicon, Ouidah, Sô-Ava

[2] Target municipalities in Côte d'Ivoire: Abobo, Abengourou, Bouaké, Gagnoa, Soubré, San Pédro, Yamoussoukro, Yopougon

[3] Law 97-029 of January 19, 1999, on the organization of municipalities in the Republic of Benin

[4] Law No. 2014-451 of August 5, 2014, on the orientation of the organization of territorial administration in Côte d'Ivoire

functions and the capacities are both presented in the figure below.

| Functions |
|---|

| Planning Coordination and Cooperation | Service Delivery | Administration and Financial Management | Human Ressources Management | Monitoring and Use of Data |
|---|---|---|---|---|

The functions are evaluated through the prism of a progression of abilities:

Human Resources/ Competencies → Policies and Procedures → Technology Tools → Citizen Engagement & Transparency → Systems and Processes

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE ISI TOOL

The implementation of the ISI tool is divided into three phases: the assessment and scoring phase, the capacity building plan development phase - known as the Institutional Strengthening Plan (ISP), and the implementation / monitoring phase of the plan.

The execution of the assessment and scoring phase can be articulated around the following three sessions:

### 1. Prior to the self-evaluation workshop

*Information and scoping session*: To ensure the success of the ISI, the USAID MuniWASH Team met with municipality partners to explain the self-assessment process, address concerns, and to explain that it is neither a competition nor an audit. The personnel of the municipalities were assured that the purpose of the self-assessment was not to identify the weaknesses of individual staff but rather to assess the functioning of the organization in the key functional areas.

### 2. Implementation of the self-evaluation

*Workshop days:* In all target municipalities in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, the two-day workshop was attended by elected officials (mayors and councilors) and agents and managers of municipal services. In some municipalities, regional directors of the deconcentrated state structures in charge of managing the water, hygiene and sanitation sector, as well as the apex associations (ANCB in Benin and UVICOCI in Côte d'Ivoire) of the municipalities, participated in the workshops. The self-evaluation consisted of the presentation of the functions to be evaluated, followed by discussions led by the facilitator to reach a consensus on the scores to be awarded.

### 3. After the self-evaluation workshop

*Analysis of the scoring grid and selection of priorities:* At the end of the self-assessment process, participants ranked performance and prioritized areas for capacity building. The scores resulted in the following three types of outcomes:

1. The municipality had no capacity in this area and there was a need for MuniWASH to provide technical support.
2. The municipality had some capacity but required additional technical support from MuniWASH.
3. The municipality was proficient in the area and required no support from the project.

## RESULTS OF ISI ASSESSMENT

### Benin

On a rating scale of 1 to 4, the overall performance score of the municipalities ranged from 1.2 to 1.7 (See Table 1). None of the municipalities was able to reach 2, indicating that there are significant capacity gaps that need to be addressed. These gaps range from lack of knowledge of the rules and laws governing the WASH sector, use of outdated strategic and programmatic documents at the municipal level, lack of adequate equipment and technology, inadequate job profiles, and insufficient staff, and low retention of staff. In addition, gender and social inclusion has been added as a cross-cutting function to all 5 main functions that have been assessed with the ISI tool in both countries. This reveals that the willingness of municipalities to promote gender and social inclusion is hampered by the lack of coherent policies and resources to support gender issues at the municipality management level.

| TABLE 1: OVERALL SCORES BY MUNICIPALITY IN BENIN | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Municipalities | Ab-Calavi | Allada | Aplahoué | Avrankou | Cotonou | Bohicon | So-Ava | Ouidah |
| Score | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.7 |

### Côte d'Ivoire

On a rating scale of 1 to 4, the performance of municipal services ranges from 1.2 to 1.6. This level of performance reflects a situation characterized by (1) inadequate municipal staffing for the size of the communes' population; (2) inadequate skills for WASH planning, coordination, and cooperation functions; (3) lack of procedural manuals to guide services; (4) low levels of social inclusion and citizen participation; (5) inadequate equipment for the technological challenge; and (6) lack of an operational monitoring and data management system.

| TABLE 2: OVERALL SCORES BY MUNICIPALITY IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Municipalities | Abobo | Abengourou | Bouaké | Gagnoa | Soubre | S-Pedro | Yamoussoukro | Yopougon |
| Score | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 |

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

### Benin

Alladatin Eménique, WASH Assistant at the National Association of Benin Municipalities: "*I have a very good impression of the quality of the debates. It's a real satisfaction.*"

Wilfried Tchabi, representative of the General Directorate of Local Authorities: "*ISI is a tool that I was not familiar with. It is a real feeling of satisfaction for me. I hope that this tool will also be implemented in other communes in Benin that are not MuniWASH partners*".

**Côte d'Ivoire**

Korotoum Diomande, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Bouaké: "*In the life cycle of an organization, it is good for the manager and staff to pause and reflect on their performance. Are we on track, are we doing the right things? That's what ISI is all about.*"

Valentin Boni, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Gagnoa: "*The exercise has highlighted our weaknesses. We will build onthem to improve city services.*

## LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons learned from the implementation of the ISI are presented below.

● **Understanding the tool and its adaptation**

For the municipalities to continue applying ISI beyond the life of the project, they need skilled facilitators. It is essential for the workshop facilitator, who is responsible for the quality of the discussions, to master the entire deployment mechanism of the questionnaire integrated into the ISI tool (functions, capacities). In addition, the facilitator must have a solid knowledge of the water and sanitation sector, but also of the functioning of local governance to better guide the discussions. In response to that, MuniWASH should be training facilitators to sustain the tool beyond the life of the project.

● **Stakeholder engagement**

To obtain a strong stakeholders engagement, it is essential to make the link between technical needs and political will in a face-to-face discussion and obtain a consensus at the end of the exchanges. In addition, the interactions between participants showed a weak collaboration between officials of the deconcentrated state services in charge of managing the water and sanitation sector and the municipal elected actors.

Furthermore, to create the conditions for fruitful exchanges, it is essential to ensure a good representation of the municipalities, including both the technical staff of the municipal administration and the local elected officials.

● **Identification of strengths and weaknesses with the self-evaluation approach**

Municipalities perceive the ISI tool as a true reflection of their level of performance. As claimed by the stakeholders, this tool enables them to highlight their own strengths and weaknesses through the assessment, which allows them to identify relevant actions to fill these gaps. The use of a participatory approach during the self-assessment is fundamental to facilitate the appropriation of the tool by the participants. Additionally, the questionnaire must be formulated to ensure understanding by the participants; in turn, this will improve the quality of the discussions.

● **On the analysis of the performance of water, hygiene and sanitation systems at the municipal level**

The ISI tool showed that the challenges for large municipalities (including capital cities) and small municipalities are similar in terms of WASH service management with the same needs for sanitation products and services.

Among the similarities, the following points can be noted

- Apart from the municipalities of Abobo and Yopougon, which have a collective sewerage network, on-site sanitation is the wastewater management most used by households.

- The market for fecal sludge services is not very dynamic outside the cities of Abidjan and Bouaké.

- Most target municipalities do not have adequate wastewater treatment plants outside of San Pedro

and Bouaké.

- The regulation of sanitation products and services is insufficient.

## CONCLUSION

Government decentralization is a process aimed at transferring powers from the central level to the local level. Through this mechanism, the municipalities are propelled to the controls of the fundamental axis of local development. This form of local governance requires to put citizen participation at the heart of the management of the public affairs of the community. This is why the ISI tool is a critical instrument for municipalities to evaluate the services offered at a given frequency, to assess the level of performance or underperformance, and to learn lessons for improvements.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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