



© Helvetas/PatrickRohr

REGLEAU: DECENTRALIZING WATER SERVICES IN HAITI

The Reinforcing Governance of Local Water and Sanitation Services program (REGLEAU) in Haiti is decentralizing WASH service provision in accordance with Haiti's 2009 water sector reform law. While Haiti's central government and its regional representatives currently lead the vast majority of water service provision, ranging from regulation to infrastructure building and management, REGLEAU is progressing toward full localization of these services at the municipal level.

The REGLEAU program is led by the National Directorate for Drinking Water and Sanitation (DINEPA) in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior (MICT) and four municipalities in and around Jacmel, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Transitioning to decentralized services is a long-term process that requires a set of accompanying measures to strengthen the capacity of system actors to assume new functions. As an implementing partner, Helvetas supports operationalization of the systemic approach as a way to transition towards municipalities taking over WASH services as maîtres d'ouvrage (contracting authorities).

Key Results (as of March 2022)

What we supported	What that led to	What that influences
<p>Creation of WASH Unites in 4 municipalities as contracting authorities for water services</p> <p>19 procurement tenders led by municipalities for water infrastructures, technical services, and to protect 4 key sources</p>	<p>7 water systems rehabilitated, currently serving 14,288 people</p> <p>Work on 5 additional water systems is underway to reach 14,790 more people</p>	<p>DINEPA and the Ministry of the Interior accept the idea to establish municipal WASH Units as part of the national administrative reform program (discussions in progress)</p>

Systems Thinking Approach

During the one-year inception phase that began in November 2017, REGLEAU partners created spaces for key national, regional and local actors to meet and share their concerns and aspirations related to the transition. Together they mapped core WASH system functions, the responsible actors, sources of revenue, institutional factors beyond the WASH sector and key challenges and bottlenecks. The participatory analysis enabled the partners to develop a common vision of the future system, its actors and their functions, and to prioritize measures for supporting the key changes before formally launching interventions in 2019.



Training Municipal WASH Unit members on water quality testing.

Municipal WASH Units

Following a systems thinking approach, the creation of municipal WASH Units enables local governance actors to assume new functional roles (e.g., planning, budgeting and contracting). DINEPA's regional office (OREPA) defined tasks for each function and grouped them into four profiles (coordination, technical, social and administrative). These profiles were then attributed to three existing municipal employees joined by OREPA's local technical officer (TEPAC). These newly formed, four-person WASH Units were trained to lead technical studies, planning exercises, public consultations, procurement of technical experts and construction firms, and delegation of operation contracts to private entities. As part of the maitrise d'ouvrage, projects move ahead only with the full involvement and co-facilitation of the WASH Units at each step of approved WASH projects.

Capacity building of Municipal WASH Units

Municipal employees are trained on 10 water service planning and management topics. A structured process for on the job learning (depicted below) helps them to master and assume their new functions.



Replication

REGLEAU's systems approach is based on a balance between i) creating municipal WASH Units to anchor the collaboration between the mayors, sub-municipal administrators, water user associations and water supply system operators; ii) supporting OREPA's role of technical advising and quality control in the regions; and iii) accompanying DINEPA at the central level with the regulatory framework and strategic orientations for WASH sector development.

REGLEAU has sufficiently progressed in the four pilot municipalities for replication of the model elsewhere in Haiti. This includes creating and coaching municipal WASH Units to conduct participatory planning, design and procurement, source protection and supervision of works. The approaches and tools will be refined based on initial lessons learned.

What we have learned since 2018	How we integrate this going forward
Decentralization takes time. The current norm of implementing WASH projects via external aid carries high expectations for quick implementation of new or rehabilitated water supply systems. Notwithstanding the pandemic and socio-political lockdowns, it took 24 months for the process of localizing teams, skills and processes within a municipality to get water flowing. At several key moments the REGLEAU team had to resist pressure from elected leaders to skip steps or substitute system actors.	Fundamentally, REGLEAU avoids substituting water service provision. Without full involvement of the system actors (regional water authority, municipal WASH Units, users' associations, private actors), the team does not advance on any step in the process, regardless of external pressures. Regular reminders of the motto "Nous le faisons ensemble, nous ne faisons pas sans eux!" ("We do it together, we don't do it without them!") reinforced the message to the stakeholders and the public.
Although Helvetas' decades of WASH project management experience in Haiti is useful, developing the REGLEAU team's capacity to facilitate change management was a priority. For each step in the contracting authority process, it was important to observe the skill level and experience of the actors and adopt facilitation styles accordingly. Raising the involvement of municipal counterparts from the <i>observer</i> level to one of <i>co-facilitator</i> as early as possible is essential to influence municipal actors to fully assume their new roles.	Systems thinking means understanding how best to coach system actors to assume their new roles. Helvetas initiates a "learning by doing" training process to accompany a municipality in assuming its role as contracting authority. This is much broader than WASH project management and includes transferring a strong grasp of planning and execution of source conservation, technical studies, public restitutions, procurement of experts and construction firms, and provisions for delegation of water management services.

What we have learned since 2018	How we integrate this going forward
<p>Although turnover of locally elected leaders and their staff was identified as a risk and an argument against moving forward with decentralization, the WASH Units have proven to be as stable as other actors and institutions. However, structures and procedures must be in place that do not depend on individuals. The approach towards creating and supporting WASH Units follows this principle.</p>	<p>Continuous capacity strengthening of the WASH Units requires regular performance reviews. We will provide procedure manuals based on the pilot experience. Discussions are underway between DINEPA and MICT to institutionalize the WASH Units under the reorganization plan of municipalities by the MICT so that these personnel remain regardless of a change in municipal leadership.</p>
<p>Municipalities are responsible for the development of the entire communal territory—not just urban centers. This requires substantial involvement of the rural section administrators (CASEC) in the decentralization process. This important change requires close coordination between the CASEC and the mayor of his or her territory. The new role of the municipality as the contracting authority for rural water works can upend existing power relationships and lead to sidelining of CASEC, who in turn adopt a self-preservation stance.</p>	<p>Going forward, for a plausible inter-communal, coordinated maitrise d’ouvrage, it is crucial that the CASEC are part of dialogue and decisions. The roles and responsibilities must be clear and municipalities must acknowledge and involve CASEC in key stages of planning, prioritization and accountability processes. The upstream sharing of information by the municipality with the CASEC is essential for proper management of the system and facilitation of social accountability mechanisms.</p>
<p>The importance of getting communities to think upstream about where their water comes from and how they protect and conserve this resource cannot be understated. It also implies that downstream communities must acknowledge and understand the needs of upstream communities.</p>	<p>REGLEAU capitalizes on references and tools developed in previous Helvetas projects, notably the national source protection strategy that is included in DINEPA’s technical reference framework. One reference, "Protection of catchments and boreholes", calls for establishing watershed committees with communities upstream and downstream from the source and network.</p>
<p>The systems approach involves actors not usually associated with WASH programming, such as the Ministry of the Interior. Bottlenecks may be encountered outside of the WASH sector, such as local fiscal mobilization required to ensure the creation and functioning of municipal WASH Units.</p>	<p>REGLEAU provides support to the municipalities to support taxpayer inventory, invoicing and collection mechanisms, campaigns on “Pay your taxes so the municipality can provide water services”. These interventions are coupled with stimulating municipal mechanisms for downward accountability to users.</p>
<p>Despite concerns perceived among some DINEPA and OREPA government actors, decentralization will not see the importance of their roles diminish. Rather, the role of regulating and controlling (and thus monitoring) the provision of WASH services by DINEPA’s directorates and regional representations (OREPA) will increase with decentralization.</p>	<p>Quality control of municipal water supply services, especially in remote / difficult to access areas is crucial. OREPA is directly involved in key stages of water service provision and must know the realities and operating methods of the municipalities. Going forward, we will focus on OREPA’s capacity to assure regulation and technical oversight.</p>
<p>REGLEAU is designed and focused on influencing systemic change rather than on needs. Monitoring the qualitative changes observed among the actors is therefore necessary; for example: the involvement and capacity of the WASH Units to fulfill their new functions as contracting authorities.</p>	<p>Ensure that the project monitoring system has qualitative indicators, means of verification and tools to measure the progress. In the case of municipal WASH Units, monitor changes in the motivation, capacity and authority of members every six months. Involve OREPA in the process.</p>

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation - # 4, Delmas 81, Delmas, Haiti - +509 2813 1730

haiti@helvetas.org

www.helvetas.org