DRY TAPS

A DAMNING VERDICT ON THE STATE OF WATER UTILITIES IN NIGERIA

RENEVLYN Development Initiative

ECUMENICAL WATER NETWORK AFRICA

EDEN

MARCH 2025

Acknowledgment

Special thanks to the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), the Citizens Free Service Forum (CFSF), Environmental Defenders Network (EDEN), Ecumenical Water Network Africa (EWN-A), New Life Community Care Initiative (NELCCI) and the Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDEC) for their time and immense contribution to this report collated and edited by the Renevlyn Development Initiative (RDI).

Authors

- **Philip Jakpor,** Renevlyn Development Initiative, www.renevlyninitiative.org
- **Aminu Mohammed Shehu** and **Bomoi Mohammed Ibraheem,** Citizens Free Service Forum, www.cfsf.com.ng
- **Reverend Kolade Fadahunsi,** Ecumenical Water Network Africa, www.blue-community.net
- **Florence Ifeanyi-Aneke,** New Life Community Care Initiative, nelcci207@yahoo.com
- **Tijani Abdulkareem,** Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre, www.serdec.org
- **Hannah Akpan,** Environmental Defenders Network, www.envirodefendersnet.org

The advice of Comrade Sikiru Waheed, General Secretary of AUPCTRE, Comrade Abiodun Bakare, AUPCTRE Lagos Secretary, Comrade Sani Baba, Executive Director of CFSF and Barrister Chima Williams, Executive Director of EDEN are acknowledged.

Foreword

Dry Taps: A Damning Verdict on the State of Water Utilities in Nigeria provides an insight into the seeming intractable water crisis that has enveloped all the states of the federation with particular focus on the reasons behind the situation.

Though the scope of this research is limited only to six out of Nigeria's 36 states, it deliberately captures the situation in at least one state per geographical zone, making it a sneak peek into the overall picture of access to water in the entire federation. The report covers Lagos and Oyo in the South west, Enugu in the Southeast, Edo State in the Niger Delta, Kano in the Northwest, as well as Kogi in North Central Nigeria.

Due to manpower and resource challenges the research focused on the water situation in the cities since it is already a forgone conclusion that the rural communities where 70 percent of Nigeria's population are found rely only on streams, rivers and in a few cases private water vendors and boreholes to meet their domestic water needs. The findings presented in this report are a percursor to a broader investigation already in the works targeting all the states of the federation.

The conclusions reached in this report were arrived at based on the interviews, observations and the assessments of the organisations in the respective states that carried out this work.

Highlights:

- Most of the major waterworks in the six states are functioning epileptically and far below installed capacity.
- Most of the mini and micro-waterworks in the sampled states are either completely shut or neglected or outrightly vandalized and stripped.
- There is low morale among workers in the public utilities due to the lack of government attention on the state of their work places and delay in payment of salaries.

Introduction

On 22 March every year since 1993, the United Nation's coordination mechanism on water and sanitation commemorates the importance of freshwater.

World Water Day continues to serve as the opportunity to raise awareness about the 2.2 billion people, especially in Subsaharan Africa living without access to safe water and the need for urgent collaborative action to tackle the crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Some of the very crucial issues that are highlighted during the World Water Day commemoration include water scarcity, water pollution, inadequate water supply, lack of sanitation, and the impacts of climate change on water bodies. The commemoration also brings to light the inequality of access to WASH services and the need to guarantee the human right to water and sanitation through policy and national legislation.

To commemorate the 2025 World Water Day in Nigeria, a coalition of water justice organisations and the AUPCTRE, the largest union under the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) decided to conduct an assessment of the state of water utilities in select states of the Nigerian federation.

The research is intended to understand the nature of the problems in the water utilities, to guage the resillence of the existing facilities and to add to the pool of scattered information on the reason why our taps are not running.

Ultimately the findings are meant to inspire the Nigerian government to commit to addressing the looming threat to public health through sustainable public funding of water utilities and the improvement of the conditions of workers in the water sector.

Fact-finding Visits

Between 10-17 March 2025 field monitors from the different organisations that agreed to work on this project embarked on visits to the major water utilities in Lagos, Oyo, Kano, Kogi, Enugu and Edo states to ascertain if they were working optimally and delivering on their mandate.

The research work focussed on the state of infrastructure in the water utilities, the manpower needs and other issues militating against their optimal delivery. The findings per state are captured below:

Lagos State

The current water needs of Lagos residents is about 750MGD. To meet the demands of residents the state government established three major waterworks (Adiyan, Iju and Isashi) and 48 others categorized as either mini or macro waterworks. Lagos also has a network of 180 km transmission mains and 2.215 km distribution mains of which some are over 100 years.

Unfortunately successive governments politicized the running of most of the waterworks leading to their running aground. As at the time of filing this report, only the Iju and Adiyan 1 facilities are in operation, though both functioning far below installed capacity.

In 2017, following findings that there was already a deficit of 500 MGD in water supply in the state, the administration of former governor, Akinwunmi Ambode voted about N760 million for the supposed rehabilitation of all the waterworks.

• *Non functional pumps worth millions of naira in Iju waterworks*

https://thesun.ng/lagos-requires-720m-gallons-of-water-daily-says-ambode/

https://punchng.com/lagos-to-provide-70-million-gallons-of-water-daily-sanwo-olu/#google_vignette

Disturbingly, nothing on ground suggests that the monies were put to good use as most of them are comatose, impaired or at best operating far below their installed capacities.

Currently Lagos struggles to provide about 210 MGD. The Babajide Sanwolu administration has promised that at completion in 2027, the N5 billion Adiyan Phase II water scheme under construction would add an additional 70MGD to the current capacity of the state. Despite popular opinion, the state government is also in a desperate push for the introduction of Public Private Partnership (PPP) in the water sector.

To ascertain the status of the only operating water utilities in the state, the Iju and the Adiyan 1 (Akute water in-take) both of which provide more than half of the water for residents of the city were visited. The team also visited the Isashi and Shasha waterworks to ascertain their functionality.

Iju Waterworks

Iju Waterworks which has an installed capacity of 45 MGD is located in Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos and was established in 1905. As at the time of the visit the facility was barely producing 10 MGD.

• *Empty sedimentation tank in Iju*

Challenges

- **Electricity Supply**
  Though the facility enjoys regular power suppl, it comes at huge unsustainable cost. It was learnt that the state government is currently constructing an Independent Power Plant (IPP) that the facility will be connected to at completion.

- **Aging Infrastructure**
  The facility's pipelines, pumps, and treatment systems are old and deteriorating, causing inefficiencies and frequent breakdowns. Out of the 12 water pumps in the facility only two are functional. A proposal by the Lagos Water Corporation to the Lagos state government for the purchase of six brand new pumps since 2024 is yet to be addressed.

- **Staff Morale and Welfare**
  It was learnt that Iju only has one staff and four contract workers for a facility that should ideally operate with 30 production staff. The shortage of skilled personnel has also increased the workload on existing staff, hampering efficiency. As at when the team visited, workers at the facility are yet to be paid their January 2025 salaries which is supposed to reflect the new minimum wage of N70,000 approved by the state government in the preceding year. It was gathered that the same scenario played out in 2024 when payment of salaries for January that year only came in the month of March.

- **Water Distribution Challenges**
  Due to low production levels, many areas in Lagos that Iju waterworks is supposed to feed experience irregular or no water supply from the facility. Even communities around do not get adequate water. Leakages in aging pipelines contribute to high water loss, reducing the amount of water available for public use.

- **Financial Constraints**
  The lack of sustainable government funding has hindered necessary upgrades, maintenance, and expansion efforts, making the facility operate below capacity.

Adiyan 1 (Akute Intake) Waterworks

The Adiyan 1 relies on the Ogun River and is supposed to produce 70MGD. Raw water is abundant but unfortunately the facility is only able to produce 10 MGD because of similar constraints found in Iju.

• *Non functional machines in Adiyan 1*

https://tribuneonlineng.com/over-n1bn-worth-of-water-pipes-stolen-from-lagos-water-works-%E2%80%95-corporation/

Challenges

- **Staffing Issues**
  Only one permanent staff and 4 contract workers work in the facility. Due to this manpower shortage the facility only operates only eight hours a day as against 24 hours.

- **Infrastructure Deficit**
  The sedimentation tank which is supposed to remove particles from the water is out of use due to the low volume of water it gets. The Adiyan facility has only two working pumps out of six and there is no standby pump, making it vulnerable to disruptions. The Governor Babajide Sanwolu administration has promised two new pumps for the facility which will take supply to 45 MGD but the plans are yet to materialize.

- **Other facilities visited**
  The team also visited Isashi with installed capacity of 4MGD which no longer produces water. Most of its infrastructure have been allegedly looted or vandalized. The same outcomes were found in Shasha waterworks in Alimosho LGA which was built to produce 2.4MGD.

  The facility has not produced a single drop of water for the past 15 years despite its location in the most populous LGA in Lagos. The vast office compound in the Shasha waterworks has been turned into an emergency car park by residents living within the vicinity and visitors who want their vehicles secured. Only security personnel were in the premises responding to enquiries.

  To a reasonable extent the Isashi and Shasha waterworks have been stripped bare and installed facilities carted away by unknown persons.

Oyo State

The Water Corporation of Oyo State evolved out of the then Western Nigeria Water Corporation through the enabling Water Corporation of Oyo State Edict No. 24 of 1977 and as reviewed by the Water Corporation of Oyo State (Amendment) Law of 2006.

The major water utilities in the state are the Asejire I & II, Eleyele I and Ogbomosho which has recently undergone repairs but not fully functional. The 13 other smaller waterworks are either not connected to the grid or in need of total rehabilitation.

The sources of water supply in the city of Ibadan are the Osun Dam on River Osun and Eleyele Dam on River Ona. The dams supply the Asejire and Eleyele water treatment plants whose combined intallled capacities account for about 80 per cent of the total water production plant capacity of the state.
For the purpose of this research the Eleyele Water Scheme which still manages to service a few residents in the city was visited.

Electric generators used to augment epileptic power supply at Eleyele Waterworks Ibadan

Eleyele I Water Scheme

The Water Corporation of Oyo State evolved out of the then Western Nigeria Water Corporation through the enabling Water Corporation of Oyo State Edict No. 24 of 1977 and as reviewed by the Water Corporation of Oyo State (Amendment) Law of 2006.

The major water utilities in the state are the Asejire I & II, Eleyele I and Ogbomosho which has recently undergone repairs but not fully functional. The 13 other smaller waterworks are either not connected to the grid or in need of total rehabilitation.

The sources of water supply in the city of Ibadan are the Osun Dam on River Osun and Eleyele Dam on River Ona. The dams supply the Asejire and Eleyele water treatment plants whose combined intallled capacities account for about 80 per cent of the total water production plant capacity of the state.
For the purpose of this research the Eleyele Water Scheme which still manages to service a few residents in the city was visited.

The Eleyele Water Scheme was established in 1942, making it one of the oldest public waterworks in Nigeria. It has a production capacity of 27MGD level but is only able to produce approximately 10–12MGD, which is less than half of its original capacity.

The facility has about 75 staff members working in various capacities, including engineering, technical operations, administration, and security.

Challenges

- **Shortage of Treatment Chemicals**
  Essential chemicals like alum, chlorine, and lime are often in short supply, affecting water purification. Procurement delays and rising costs further impact water quality.

- **Electricity Supply Issues**
  The facility heavily depends on electricity for water treatment and pumping, but the unreliable power supply has led to frequent disruptions. The use of backup generators is not sustainable due to the high cost of purchasing diesel and the frequent breakdown of the generators.

- **Aging Infrastructure**
  The facility's pipelines, pumps, and treatment systems are old and fast deteriorating, causing inefficiencies and intermittent breakdowns.

- **Staff Morale and Welfare**
  The morale of most staff members are low due to delayed salaries and unfavourable working conditions. The shortage of skilled personnel has also increased the workload on existing staff.

- **Water Distribution Challenges**
  Due to low production levels, many areas in Ibadan experience irregular or no water supply from the Eleyele Water Scheme. Leakages in aging pipelines contribute to high water loss, reducing the amount available for public use.

- **Financial Constraints**
  The lack of sufficient government funding has hindered necessary upgrades, maintenance, and expansion efforts.

• *The environment in Eleyele water scheme*

Kogi State

• *Abandoned broken down vehicles*

In the Kogi State Capital, Lokoja there are two major waterworks - the Old Waterworks and the Greater Kogi Waterworks with eight sub-stations across the three senatorial zone of the state.

The old waterworks was created during the colonial era when Lord Lugard was the British colonial governor, and Lokoja served as the administrative center for the British colonial administration. The old waterworks was created in 1946 when Lokoja was serving a settlement of less than 100,000 population. With the rising urban migration and increase in population it became inadequate to supply water to the over a million people living in Lokoja. This gave rise to the establishment of the Greater Lokoja waterworks in 2011 by the government of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris. Both waterworks served the state capital until the 2022 flooding season which damaged the water infrastructure in the state.

With repairs and upgrading carried out by the government the old waterworks now has an installed capacity of 2MGD. The Greater Lokoja Waterworks and all other zonal sub-station offices are not producing water and are on lock down.

Challenges

- **Drop in production levels**

  The Old Waterworks is still not able to address the crisis of inadequate water supply. The Greater Lokoja Waterworks and all the zonal offices are not functioning.

• *Workshop storehouse surrounded by weeds*

- **Staffing Issues**

  Most of the workers are old and retiring since they have been in service as far back as the old Kwara and Benue States when present day Kogi was under them. The two waterworks are understaffed with the eight zonal offices on lock down due to lack of staff. There is no effort being made to replace technical staff and even the state polytechnics and institutions of learning do not offer course in Water Science Engineering which should have served as a platform to train and recruit indigenous technicans.

- **Other Challenges**

  There is also the issue of inadequate power supply and persistent low current that makes it impossible to operate most of the machines. In addition, we learnt that most of the needed chemicals to treat water are not available.

Enugu State

The Enugu Water Corporation was established in 1991 though its three main water corporations had been in existence long before the 1990s. The three are Iva valley, Oji River and the 9th Mile Scheme. The Iva Valley Water Scheme was established in 1924, the 9th Mile Water Scheme in 1982 and the Oji Waterworks in 2006.

• *Enugu sedmentation tank*

Production Capacity at Establishment

9th mile - 77,000 cubic meters per day (M3/D)
Iva-valley – 20,000 M3/D
Oji – 50,000 M3/D

Current Production Level

9th mile - 70,000 M3/D
Iva-valley – 5,000 M3/D
Oji – 50,000 M3/D

Challenges

- **Poor Electricity Supply**
  Power outage to the three facilities has been a major challenge, forcing them to adopt alternative power including solar to pump water.

- **Lack of Incentives to Workers**
  The morale of the workers was low due to lack of incentives to technical workers despite the risks involved in their work.

- **Insufficient Investment in Expanding Water Networks**
  The total population of residents living in Enugu State metropolis, specifically Enugu city, is approximately 907,000 as of 2025.

  However, according to the 2022 National Census, the city had a population of 469,010 spread across the three local government areas of Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu South. Unfortunately the Enugu Water Corporation currently has only 11, 234 customers. It was learnt that while the previous administration voted millions of naira on expanding the network mains there is almost nothing to show for the sums expended. There is evidence that the current administration is building new pipelines to connect residents in the city. Until that plan is concluded, many still rely on boreholes and private water vendors exposing them to vulnerability of huge costs and illnesses associated with unsafe water.

Edo State

• *Ugbowo waterboard abandoned*

The Edo Urban Water Corporation is under the Ministry of Water Resources. For water supply the state relies on three dams - Ikpoba Dam which has a production capacity of 90 MGD, Ojirami Dam which has 45 MGD and Ugboha Dam which has a capacity of 9 MGD. There are also two wells that at a point produced about 3.5MGD.

The dams feed the Ugbowo and Iyaro Headworks which the fact finding team visited. In addition to being supplied by the dams, the headworks have boreholes where more water can be accessed in the event that the dam may not be able to supply enough.

The dams, wells and head-works all have a treatment plant in the facility where they are located to aid the purification and treatment process before delivery.

Ikopba River Dam

The Ikpoba river dam located at Okhoro community of Benin City has been left fallow and some privately owned fish ponds were also sited within the vicinity. The dam which used to produce over 90MGD, was confirmed to be no longer operational as the pumping facility had been abandoned.

Although the office buildings were in good shape with about 15 staff members, including the security assigned to the facility, there is no activity taking place with respect to water production or supply.

Ugbowo and Iyaro Headworks

The Ugbowo and Iyaro headworks in Benin City, used to produce 10,000 M3/D. The two facilities were built to supply water to residents of Edo North, Central and South but water supply from the two facilities has ground to nil.

- *Abandoned premises at Ikpoba Dam*
- *Iyaro reservoir non functional*

- **Crumbled Infrastructure**

  Ikpoba, the biggest dam is no longer in operation and its environment overgrown with weeds and water hyacinth. It's the same situation with the headworks in Iyaro and Ugbowo as well as the wells. The two remaining dams function epileptically and are not able to supply the Iyaro and Ugbowo headworks. The premises where the Ugbowo headworks is situated has been left to rot by the state government and its expansive compound is now occupied by another agency.

- **Electricity supply issues**

  One of the issues that ground the dam and the headworks to a total halt is unstable power supply, as the facilities operated almost totally on an alternate power supply at huge cost.

- **Insufficient Manpower**

  Aside the security personnel manning the gates, currently only six staff resume in each of the headworks and their mood is depressing as they complained of government neglect, poor productivity on their part because there is no incentive to work and irregular payment of their salaries.

- **Poor funding**

  The Ministry of Water channels very little funds into improving the state of the infrastructure and facilities tashed with providing water in the state.

Kano State

The fact finding team in Kano visited the two major waterworks - Chalawa and Tamburawa saddled with the responsibility of supplying Kano metropolis and environs with clean pipe borne water.

Challawa Water Treatment Plant

The Challawa plant located at the outskirts of Kano is the first waterworks established in 1921 with installed capacity of 2MGD. The Challawa Second Waterworks was stablished in 1972 with installed capacity 110MGD. The Challawa Third Waterworks was established in 1992 with installed capacity of 90MGD.

Unfortunately the three facilities are only able to produce about 35-40MGD out of the subtotal installed capacity which is 220MGD, which is less than 20 percent of installed capacity.

• *So many welding causing leakage of water at Tamburawa*

Tamburawa Water Treatment Plant

The Tamburawa Waterworks, also located at the outskirts of Kano, houses two facilities namely: The Old Tamburawa Waterworks-Established in 1986 with an installed capacity of 9.6MGD and later upgraded to 20MGD, and the New Tamburawa Waterworks established in the year 2008 with an installed capacity of 150MGD.

Unfortunately, the current total capacity output is less than 20MGD, for the two combineed representing a shortfall of almost 90 percent.

Aside the two major waterworks there are some 16 medium to smaller ones that are supposed to supply pipe borne water to the Kano Semi uburban and rural settlements and making up for more than 10 million citizens. From these facilities water supply is either epileptic or zero. Some are completely grounded. While the total installed capacity of Water Treatment Plants in Kano is approximately 506MGD, the actual daily water demand for Kano city and environs is about 550MGD, with the entire state requiring approximately 975MGD. Currently, all the waterworks cannot supply 10% of the daily requirements.

Challenges

- **Staffing and welfare**
  Total number of staff are 762 permanent and pensionable and 1,300 casual workers. There is inadequate in-training of personnel on new and latest technical innovations. Staff welfare is never on the forefront as the workers are yet to start enjoying the National Minimum Wage. Some casual workers have been there for more than ten years without confirmation. There is also an absence of standard work ethics, lack of equipment, safety wears, and unfriendly and hazardous working environment.

- **Erratic Power Supply**
  The facilities suffer constant power outage and managed with alternative power at huge cost of diesel, spare parts and consumables.

- **High cost of chemical for water treatment**
  This is also a major impediment to the delivery of safe water to citizens of the state.

Analysis

The failure of the waterworks in Kano in terms of delivering on their mandate is due to largely to government neglect and a lack of sustained public funding in maintenance and staffing. The Kano state government claims it has invested over N1bn in acquiring ten high capacity water pumps for the Tamburawa and Challawa Plants, aiming to increase daily water production to meet the growing needs of residents.

What is in the public dormain is that the government is engaging with World Bank on different levels: staff training, capacity building, water pumps, and pump networking, etc to pave way for privatization.

- *So many welding causing leakage of water at Tamburawa*

Summary of Findings

From all the states visited, the discoveries are similar. Utter neglect, facilities constructed and machines bought with tax payer's money running into billions of naira deliberately or negligently allowed to collapse and rot away. In some cases like in Lagos and Kano the allure of privatization by its administrators, would seem to be one of the reasons the facilities are allowed to die to pave way for privatisers to be onboarded.

Recommendations:

- The Nigerian government should declare a state of emergency in the water sector.
- Government at federal and state levels should integrate broad public participation in formulating plans to achieve universal access.
- The federal and state governments should reject all forms of water privatization and commodification.
- Federal and state governments should fully uphold the human right to water as an obligation of the government, representing the people.
- Government at all level should build the political will to prioritize water for citizens, leading to a comprehensive plan that invests in water infrastructure necessary to provide universal water access, jobs, improved public health, and invigoration of the economy.
- Government at all level should prioritize public funding for water infrastructure upgrades.
- Government should improve electricity supply to the water utilities and equally invest in alternative energy sources such as wind mills and solar technologies.
- Supply of treatment chemicals should be a priority in all states to maintain water quality.
- Current staff in the water utilities should be capacitated through trainings and motivated through enhanced pay. Technical personnel should also be recruited to enhance operational efficiency.
- Government should probe billions of naira in loans for water schemes and strengthen public accountability in the management of water resources.
- Need for Infrastructural renovation in the water utilities arising from non usage, rusting, vandalism and sabotage to ensure sustainable water supply.

DRY TAPS

A DAMNING VERDICT ON THE STATE OF WATER UTILITIES IN NIGERIA