

Water and Sanitation Service Provision in Owerri City, Nigeria

Emmanuella C. Onyenechere¹

¹·Evan Enwerem University, Geography & Environmental Management, Owerri, Nigeria

emmazob@yahoo.com

Water is an essential resource for cities and other human settlements, and has direct implications for sanitation, hygiene and the well being of the citizenry. The supply of portable water for domestic use is a major challenge for the development effort in Nigerian cities. Unfortunately, the increasing gap in the demand and supply of water has acquired crisis proportions in Nigerian cities like Owerri. Most of Nigeria's State Water Agencies (SWAs) are grappling with the multiple problems of erratic power supply, corruption and the embezzlement of public funds, faulty government policies, diversion and theft of heavy equipments, poor maintenance culture, faulty distribution system, and the topography of the area. In addition to the afore-mentioned factors, population growth and bad-housing layout in Owerri have meant that most public water facilities put in place by the SWA are over-stretched and incapable of efficient water delivery to the people. Consequently, water supply at public water taps is often irregular and of short duration, and most residents of Owerri city rely heavily on commercial borehole owners and itinerant (water tanker drivers) water vendors for their daily supplies. Meanwhile, there is an absence of a popularly acceptable regulatory framework. The activities of World Bank, African Development Bank and European Union in water and sanitation provision in Owerri have not led to improved service provision rather they have led to the emergence of fragmentation in service provision. As it is, it seems that water governance and its institutions operate more under national and local forces than international. The question is: who is in control of municipal water provision in Owerri? Is it the government, NGOs, International actors or the private water investors? The paper uses both primary and secondary data to identify those who are actually in control of the city's water and sanitation service provision, to explain the dynamics between international, national and local forces in the shaping of water governance and its institutions and to establish those served and those excluded by the public water distribution system of the city. In order to enhance regular water supply at less cost, there is need for government, to collaborate with the private sector and other community based organizations in a tripartite partnership