

Successful Municipal Experiences in Water Supply and Sanitation Services in Brazil

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PRESENTATION

This article summarises twenty successful experiences of public utility service of water supply and sanitation selected according to methodology that aims to benefit good practices in these public services. Examples of the key principles used in this selection were: universal access, equity, integrality of actions, integration across service sectors, quality of services, social control, and municipal responsibility.

Key characteristics within public utility services are emphasized in order to contribute to debate, both in Brazil and internationally, on the best way of providing water and sanitation, whether this is public or private. ASSEMAE (National Association of Municipal Services of Water Supply and Sanitation) believes that such services should be managed and provided in a public manner, involving and guaranteeing the control and participation of the citizens.

1. INTRODUCTION

ASSEMAE – a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization – was created in 1984. It aims to defend and promote the interests of municipal public utility service for the supply of water, sanitation, management of solid wastes and rain water services. This also involves engagement in the struggle against the privatization of these services.

In Brazil, there are approximately 1800 municipalities responsible for providing water and 4000 municipalities for operating sanitation services. They vary enormously in their population size, with small, medium and large municipalities (including two capitals and several municipalities with over 500,000 inhabitants).

The experiences described in this paper demonstrate the rich diversity of water supply and sanitation services in Brazilian municipalities and each case brings its own particularity and nuances. This experience acts as an advocate for the need to intensify cooperation and association among municipalities.

Similarly, there are municipalities with important experiences that are not part of this publication. However, this does not deny their immense contribution to the Brazilian sanitation structure.

Our objective is for Public Power, social agents, public institutions and civil associations to be able to discuss and benefit from experiences of the Municipalities, sharing methods of collective work.

2. METHODOLOGY FOR THE SELECTION OF EXPERIENCES

In the selection of ‘successful experience’ the following principles and guidelines were used (BRAZIL, 2004):

*To be regarded as a successful experience, a water supply and sanitation system must (i) meet in a satisfactory manner **all** of the following principles or (ii) meet in an exemplary manner **one or more** of these principles¹:*

- **Universal access** – universal provision to the target population;
- **Equity** – all citizens receive the same quality of services, irrespective of social-economic status and urban situation in which they live;
- **Integrality** – service provision with an integrated vision, that understands environmental sanitation as a set of actions, involving, at the very least, water supply, sanitation, management of solid wastes, rain water drainage and control of vectors;
- **Municipal Responsibility** – recognition of and respect for municipal autonomy, in line with constitutional requirements;
- **Public Management** - the understanding that environmental sanitation services are public by definition, provided by a public entity by nature, organized as a direct administrative organization, public company, or public and private joint stock company. In this latter case the decision-making process must rest in the hands of those responsible for the service;
- **Participation and social control** – all interests must be represented through an open, visible and participatory process, ensuring the adequate use of the service by the population.
- **Integration across sectors** – integration with urban development, public health, environmental policies and water resources. This integration is considered essential for the success of the interventions, due to the complex nature of the environmental sanitation actions.
- **Quality of services** – which includes regularity, continuity, efficiency, safety, up-to-date, courtesy and moderation of costs;
- **Access** – tariff policy compatible with users' purchasing power, according to the practice of price moderation.

The municipalities selected are those that provide their services of water supply and sanitation in an autonomous and direct manner, by means of public companies, departments and other arrangements, and where these function within the municipalities.

The municipalities selected, meeting these criteria and principles, were: Alagoinhas, Araraquara, Campinas, Caxias do Sul, Guairá, Guarulhos, Ibiporã, Ituiutaba, Jaboticabal, Passos, Penápolis, Piracicaba, Poços de Caldas, Porto Alegre, Sacramento, Santo André, Uberlândia, Unai, Viçosa and Volta Redonda. This list attended simultaneously cases with regional, population size and management model diversity.

3. MAIN STRENGTHS OF MUNICIPALITIES SELECTED

Below is a list of outstanding examples of some of the twenty experiences selected. They are grouped according to main attributes.

Participation and social control

In 2001, the municipality of Alagoinhas in Bahia was the first Brazilian municipality to approve its Environmental Sanitation Policy in a participatory way through a Conference. It was also pioneer carrying out the Environmental Sanitation, Health and Environment Inter-Sector Conference. The Municipality has just enhanced the Municipal Plan for Environmental Sanitation, with an agreement signed between the Municipal government and Federal University of Bahia. SAAE has been promoting works on sanitation with techniques of social mobilization, and involves the participation of the community.

Universal Services

Since the creation of the Service of Water Supply and Sanitation of Araraquara, São Paulo, the municipality has achieved universal access, treating and distributing 100% of the water and treating 100% of sewage collected. These goals were attained exclusively through resources obtained from

tariff revenue. Although from 1969, the population of Araraquara has increased threefold, the universal service coverage has been maintained, with high quality and social control. The Service of Water Supply and Sanitation has incorporated the management of solid wastes just over a year ago and is preparing to take on the service of rainwater drainage.

Since the 1970s, the city of Guairá, São Paulo has achieved 100% coverage in water supply and sanitation. This is the result of public administration prioritizing basic sanitation in relation to ambulatory health care and infra-structure works. Administrative continuity and planning also have contributed to the city achieving universal service. In order to ensure water with sufficiency and quality, water resources management is now being combined with the municipality's management of environmental sanitation.

The city of Unaí, Minas Gerais, provides to 100% of its population with treated water and sewage collection and treatment. Permanent investments with resources gathered from tariffs made it possible to follow the incredible growth of this city. In the last 10 years, infant death rates have been halved.

The Autonomous Service of Water and Sewage of Guarulhos has its mission: to make universal the supply of drinking water and the collection of sewage without polluting the watercourses; and to provide quality services at a fair price. There have been steps forward, recognised by users, although challenges remain, as the need to build wastewater treatment plants.. Furthermore, during the last four years, 50 thousand families without water supply now have this essential public service.

Services with focus on the citizen

Sanasa – Public Company of Environmental Sanitation of Campinas – is nationally recognized as a high tech public company, reducing water losses by policies of monitoring and uses rationalization. Sanasa is also open to social control. The three Conferences on Environmental Sanitation held by the Municipality defeated the attempt to privatize the company and denounced the Bill 4147/2001 that may have transferred, to the State of São Paulo, decisions on the running of this sanitation service. Sanasa is an example of a public company committed to the population.

Of the 153 workers from the Superintendence of Water and Sewage of Ituiutaba – SAE, 90 are directly involved in relationship with the consumer. SAE does monthly 'after service' surveys, with a sample of users that have made service requests in Commercial and Maintenance areas. These surveys have showed satisfaction rates of over 90%.

Planning

Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, is the second largest municipality in that state based on population size. Its economy is based on industrial activity and the city faces the challenge of increasing the percentage of sewage treated from 6% to 100%. The city has sought partnership with the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul for integrated planning of sanitation and the drainage of rain water. The idea is to take advantage of the structure of combined sewage collecting systems that covers 85% of the city.

With the creation of The National Metallurgy of Iron and Steel Company - CSN, the Municipality of Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro, is the cradle of Brazilian metallurgy of iron and steel. In 1993, in the face of economic recession, Volta Redonda moved on its own initiative to incorporate new management practices in order to meet the demand for efficient public services. One of the main examples of this modern management is the Autonomous Service of Water and Sewage, which adopted a wide-ranging program to control losses and, as a result, recover revenue.

Public-Public Partnerships

There are experiences in Brazil where municipalities come together in consortium, to provide water supply and sanitation services to more than one municipality. In Ibiporã, Paraná, effective public

water supply and sanitation services contribute to the health of urban and rural populations, including an infant death rate far below the national average. An inter-municipal consortium (where a group of municipalities provide water services for more than one municipality) is seen as a way of spreading and sharing this city's achievements in water supply and sanitation to other towns.

Public savings for investment

Jaboticabal, São Paulo, has resisted a private concession for wastewater treatment. In order to achieve necessary investments for the construction of a wastewater treatment plant (WTP), interceptor lines and water supply works, the Municipality created an unprecedented special fund, which is audited by civil society. The WTP is being constructed on land donated by the State of São Paulo University (UNESP), with the condition that water supply and sanitation remains in public management and the development of research projects.

From external help to the consolidation of services in a sustainable way

Sacramento, Minas Gerais, was one of the 99 municipal services of water supply and sanitation created in Brazil by the Program of Water Supply for Small Communities, started in 1966 by a loan contract. The objective of this Program was to implement water supply systems in municipalities with populations' ranging from 5 to 40 thousand inhabitants. This loan enabled the construction of water supply services in many states in the country. Twenty-two of them in the state of Minas Gerais. The SAAE of Sacramento is a regional reference to other municipalities and has been gaining respect and popular support towards becoming financially autonomous. It uses tariffs as the principal resource to investments in the area.

Service integrality

In 1999, The Municipal Service of Water Supply and Sanitation of Santo André, São Paulo - Semasa – became the first sanitation organization in the country to integrate all the components of the service: water supply, sanitation, solid wastes management and urban drainage. More recently, it also became responsible for other tasks such as environmental management. This integrality allowed a sophisticated arrangement of internal subsidy, through which sectors where costs are not recovered by tariffs could be sustained by surplus in other services. This increased opportunities for universal access.

The universal offer of service in water, sewage and solid wastes management was ensured by a continuing policy of investment, sustained by the participation of and control by users in the Deliberative Council of Water Supply and Sanitation Autarchy of Penápolis, São Paulo. The challenge is now to search for sustainability in the rural environment.

The Capital of municipal sanitation

Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, the country's cradle of participatory democracy, instituted popular participation in the definition of public budget. DMAE, a municipal company, is the largest totally municipal water supply and sanitation service provider in Brazil and has received an international award for its involvement in the global movement against the privatization of this essential service. In this capital city, the society is the protagonist of its history.

4. CONCLUSION AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The experiences presented are by no means a complete picture of efficient public providers in Brazil. They are merely examples of good practice. In Brazil, there is a set of other efficient public operators, including those in state-level companies, that could very well have been presented here. However, an outline of some public and municipal service provided was established.

Based on these experiences, ASSEMAE believes that it is possible to achieve quality universal service in water supply and sanitation, in an equitable way and with high quality performance,

when this is based on a management geared towards the interests of the citizens and involves austerity in the use of public resources. There are many ways of improving the management of services in order to ensure investment based on generated resources.

It is well-known that in order to be efficient, it is not sufficient to be public. There is a lot to do in order to improve public services that are provided to the population. However, by pointing out the strengths in this experience, this paper intends to contribute to this debate, highlighting the outstanding aspects of the described cases. From this experience, one may identify possible actions and types of organization and management which will support, in Brazil, in the Americas and around the world, the quest for universal access to services of water supply and sanitation, in ways that ensure equity, courtesy, quality and social control.

Finally, there is a new trend emerging in Brazil, with the passing of Law 11.107 in 2005. This is encouraging municipalities to form consortia, which could provide, regulate, plan and supervise the services of environmental sanitation. This arrangement may contribute to “economies of scale”, where actions that are not possible within a small municipality may be possible by a group. This arrangement could enhance the public-public partnership.

REFERENCE

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