



USAID/E3 Water Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Project

## **GLOBAL WATERS RADIO**

### **Salamatu Garba on the Continuing Impact of Water and Development Alliance in Nigeria**

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**Global Waters Radio:** You are tuned in to Global Waters Radio, a podcast series produced by the Water Team at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The series offers listeners insights from USAID officials, development partners, thought leaders, and experts from across the water sector, as they discuss current USAID water programming and cutting edge research from around the world.

This week, we're taking you to Nigeria, for a chat with Salamatu Garba. She is Executive Director of the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN), which seeks to sustainably improve quality of life for Nigeria's rural women, and empower entire communities with improved water and sanitation management in the process. Salamatu is coming off an especially big year in 2016, when she became an ASHOKA Fellow for Nigeria and was nominated to the steering committee of the Netherlands-based Women for Water Partnership.

Much of the success she and her organization have enjoyed in recent years trace back to a project implemented 10 years ago through one of USAID's longest running public-private partnerships, the Water and Development Alliance (WADA), a partnership between USAID and Coca-Cola. Today on the podcast, Salamatu talks about WADA's continuing impact in Nigeria, the strategic importance of empowering women with greater decision-making roles in the water and sanitation sectors, and her thoughts on current WASH opportunities and challenges facing Nigeria's local communities.

**Salamatu, to start things off, introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us briefly about how you became involved with Nigeria's Women Farmers Advancement Network.**

**Salamatu Garba:** Thank you very much. My name is Salamatu Garba. I am the founder of Women Farmers Advancement Network, a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1993. WOFAN was formed out of the plight of the rural women in northern Nigeria. The situation in which we find ourselves, and having come from that area, I'm a

privileged person to have gone to school up to the university level, and even being a lecturer.

I stumbled across one of my village women—pregnant, with loads of wood on her head, coming from the farm, some livestock—and I stopped to chat with her. And she told me the life of a woman is nothing more than being subservient to a man, give birth, get pregnant, and that is it until God takes your life.

And for me, it really touched my heart. That was the beginning of my journey with the rural women. So that was how we started WOFAN. Today I sit as the executive director, pursuing policy issues and making sure that implementation is done the way it is supposed to be; a voice is given to community people; and they have a say, and they own whatever project that they participate in.

So today I belong to a very important network just because of the passion that started with the rural women, and WADA stepping into my life. And now, being an ASHOKA fellow and a member of Women for Water Partnership, I think we will make sure the Sustainable Development Goals are implemented and owned by the rural communities.

**GWR: Can you describe the project WADA supported in 2007, and talk about how this project has impacted you personally, your organization, and local communities in the last 10 years.**

**SG:** I'm happy to have WADA. I worked with them 10 years ago. I want to work with them another 10—and another 10 years to see that we change the situation of the rural community not just in Nigeria, but across the region if it is possible.

The WADA project provided access to water, sanitation, and hygiene practices to the targeted communities. The project started in 2007, targeting 22 communities, and direct beneficiaries—33,000 of them. During that program, we established 660 environmental health club members. These are supposed to be change agents—children that were supposed to inculcate that habit of hygiene and sanitation in them. So in the 22 communities, there were 30 of them each—15 boys and 15 girls. So, during the life of WADA program, we also had 126 compartments of VIP latrines, and we had 92 compartments of urinals and handwashing facilities. But for all the other things—the toilets, the VIP latrines, the urinals—they came up to change the life of the people. So that's the hardware component of the project.

Now for the software component, it's about the behavior changes and so on and so forth, like I have explained to you. So this is what we did: The whole success of this project was just because of the dignity it brought to the community, the dignity it brought to WOFAN. And it's nothing more than because it has given people what they need. And not just what people think they want—this is a top prioritized facility that community people need. And it is given to them. So they receive this with every respect. WADA is making me want to do more. I feel challenged every day to address

the needs of the community. And it's like the WADA project read my mind when I met that rural woman and I decided to be a change maker.

So I want WADA to be a life partner of WOFAN if possible because they were the entry point for all of these success stories that I'm talking to you about. WOFAN itself became uplifted from the moment we started work with WADA, because shortly after the WADA program—jointly sponsored by USAID, Coca Cola Africa Foundation—USAID decided to task WOFAN for another one year with a project, and it became multifold, just like the WADA program. Then we extended, and USAID worked with WOFAN for six years in Nigeria. And we scaled up from just 150 groups to 1,500 groups. And we spread to three other states. Now, [the] USAID project, which came immediately after WADA project, supported 100 communities.

By today, 80 percent of all the facilities we provided are still functioning. And the reason being that we give skill to community members, left the skills in the community, gave them tools and linked them to the local authorities so that, collectively, they can address issues of maintaining their WASH facilities. We didn't leave a group that will fold their arms and say that the funders or the partners have not come back. No. They were able to take charge in maintaining these facilities, and even support neighboring communities. Again, our project was a platform for other USAID components to build on, and that created the spirit of partnership.

**GWR: Why is it important that WADA and WOFAN empower communities to take ownership of their water and sanitation improvements? And can you share with our listeners any stories about the changes you have seen in the communities where WOFAN has been active over the years?**

**SG:** More women wanted to marry in the communities where WASH facilities are. Because nobody wanted to marry in the place where she would go and be trekking long distances. So girls were really rushing for men from communities that WOFAN dug boreholes and provided toilet facilities.

So it means that community members now have a sense of dialoguing, understanding policy, and making it a demand-driven thing. And women now came to say even they want their water near hospitals, where they can attend clinics and so on. All of this is coming from the initiative of the WADA program which was started because WADA program has strengthened our organizational skills. It has also made our community-led approach—that is the participatory approach—stronger, because we do community planning and so on to allow community members to have a sense of belonging in whatever they do.

So this is what it has transformed WOFAN to, that today we can compete with any organization to do our program because from the planning, to implementing, to monitoring, we are fit to go, and we are really very grateful.

**GWR: You mentioned before why women's empowerment means so much to you personally. How have WADA and WOFAN helped empower rural Nigerian women, and why do you think this is important for local communities and, ultimately, Nigeria's future?**

**SG:** Women now command respect. Women in the community have dignity. The girls now go to school. Women don't need to sneak to the bush to go to the toilet. And what is most important to me is the fact that women are being listened to in the community now. The dignity is continuing for them. On and on and on, every day, these communities become model to other communities near them. And like I've told you, from 150 groups, we are now 1,500 groups, and each member of the 1,500 is a mentor to another 30. So it means we are multiplying 1,500 by 30, so we should be about 45,000 now, working along this path.

**GWR: What are some of the ways today that WOFAN's work is continuing WADA's legacy, and what are some of rural Nigeria's key development priorities going forward?**

**SG:** Well, I will want to look at the future, and how we drive the WADA concept. It has come with a lot of awareness, and so on. I will want to suggest that we give a lot of power to community people to own this program. And the power is going to be for instance in translation of policy. We'll try as much as possible to bring policy issues to the doorstep of community members. We will use different means—local language dramas, songs, and so on—and with that, they will be able to ask politicians to translate election promises into action.

Water links every aspect of development. But principally, we'll have to hammer more on nutrition issues. I also want to plead we pay attention to data management. Data—the way we collect and manage data—is something that should emerge in the next decade of WADA program. So that transparently we will be able to calculate what we have done, how much life it has impacted, and then it will be able to link with other partners. Let's have a coalition of nutritionists, of water vendors, and so on, so that we have a common voice, and be able to tackle water.

It is only when we do that that we can get water for all—for every reason, and for every use.

**GWR: Salamatu, thank you so much for sharing your time with us today.**

**SG:** Thank you very much, we are deeply grateful.

**GWR:** For more information about the Water and Development Alliance and the Women Farmers Advancement Network, please click on the links below. And as always, if you have a topic you would like to see covered in a future edition of the podcast, drop us a line at [waterteam@usaid.gov](mailto:waterteam@usaid.gov).

This is Global Waters Radio.