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## PRESS RELEASE

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# **USAID Partners with Imo to Improve WASH State to ‘corporatize’ Water Board for better performance**

**Owerri** – On July 16, 2020, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Stephen M. Haykin joined with Governor Hope Uzodinma in a virtual signing ceremony to formalize a new partnership with Imo State to improve the management and delivery of water and sanitation (WASH) services to help people live healthier lives through reliable access to clean water.

Today’s Memorandum of Understanding outlines commitments between USAID and Imo State to jointly develop a professionally managed, commercially oriented, and accountable state Water Board. This will be accomplished by improving the Water Board’s financial viability, and strengthening policy, institutional, and regulatory frameworks for better WASH service delivery.

“By strengthening the Water Board’s capacity to make solid investment decisions, improve billing and collection systems, and improve responsiveness to customer needs,” Haykin said at the ceremony, “USAID, through E-WASH, will help increase access to clean water and reduce waterborne disease in Imo State, feeding into our mutual goal of creating a healthier, more economically robust Nigeria.”

After formal declaration of corporatization of the new Imo State Water and Sewerage Corporation, Governor Uzodinma, promised to announce the board of directors at a later date said

In his remarks, Governor Uzodinma acknowledged that up to 85 percent of his rural constituents lack access to a reliable source of running water and expressed hope that within a year the activity could reach up to 100,000 residents of the state.

“This project is consistent with the goals of my administration to ensure that the welfare of my people is advanced and protected,” the governor said. “Therefore, I commit our cooperation to ensure this project is delivered. We are [also] committed to running the Imo Water Board as a business to ensure its commercial viability.”

Through the \$60.4 million Effective Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services (E-WASH) activity, USAID will support Imo and five other states to increase access to clean water and reduce disease by strengthening their Water Boards’ capacity to make solid investment decisions, improve billing and collection systems, and ensure greater responsiveness to customer concerns.

Over four years, E-WASH will spur the mobilization of an additional \$50 million from public and private sources. It will also provide access to piped clean water to at least 50,000 households. Delta, Abia and Taraba have all signed similar agreements.

E-WASH is one component of a wider USAID effort to foster closer coordination with federal and state government agencies to advance broad-based economic growth and resilience in Nigeria through improved WASH services.

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**PHOTO CAPTION:** Governor Hope Uzodinma displays the signed Memorandum of Understanding between Imo State and USAID that will help corporatize its Water Board and improve service delivery to residents.

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