



**GOVERNMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

**MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES**

## **The National Water and Sanitation Policy: About Rural Water Supply**



April 2014



## Executive Summary

The aim of the National Water and Sanitation Policy is to improve the financing, management, and delivery of sustainable water services in Sierra Leone and to enable rural and urban communities to adopt safe hygiene and sanitation practices and consume safe water.

With water becoming increasingly scarce and often of inferior quality, an integrated water resources management approach is needed to ensure that water does not become a constraint to national development.

Prior to the launch of the NWSP, the institutional framework, WASH policies and any corresponding legislation was disjointed. In the past, water was viewed as an abundant free commodity and as such minimal attention was paid to the different uses and users. Along with rapid disorderly urbanisation and little coordination amongst stakeholders, water resources were being used in a non optimal and unsustainable manner.

The National Water and Sanitation Policy provides overall direction for addressing the challenges the sector faces. The NWSP aligns WASH policy objectives with Sierra Leone's Development Vision 2025, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper objectives and the commitments to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is hoped that with a more suitable, overarching policy in place, optimal planning of resources can take place resulting in better economic use of Sierra Leone's rich water resources.

The current situation on water resources management underlines the fact that an integrated water resources management approach is needed to ensure that water does not become a constraint to national development. Like in many societies in Africa, water was regarded as a free commodity in Sierra Leone, considered unlimited in quantity. However, with continued population growth, disorderly fast urbanisation especially in the capital city, Freetown and rapidly growing and diversified water use, the abundant resource is becoming increasingly artificially scarce and often of inferior quality.

This trend is aggravated by current practices whereby planning, development and management of the resource are approached from a sectoral perspective without coordination among the relevant stakeholder institutions. This has often resulted in non-optimal and unsustainable use of the resource.

### **Rural Water Supply– Specific NWSP Policy Objectives**

The broad rural water supply sub-sector policy objective is to improve health and alleviate poverty of the rural population through improved access to adequate safe water. The specific objectives are:

- (i) To improve access to reliable water supply services for the rural population from the present 32% and achieve the overall national target of 74% by year 2015.
- (ii) To ensure that communities participate in the planning, construction, ownership, operation and maintenance of their water supply schemes.
- (iii) To encourage and promote appropriate technology for rural water supply schemes.
- (iv) To gradually increase communities' obligations for paying for operations and maintenance costs of water schemes.
- (v) To establish domestic water supply minimum service levels.
- (vi) To provide adequate water for other rural economic activities.
- (vii) To develop other water supply technologies such as rainwater harvesting.

- (viii) To encourage fair representation of women in planning, decision making and management of water schemes.
- (ix) To promote participation of the private sector in the delivery of water supply related goods and services.
- (x) To develop appropriate mechanisms for monitoring rural water supply activities.
- (xi) To enable local community ownership of rural water supply schemes.
- (xii) To establish fora for coordination and collaboration among various rural water stakeholders.
- (xiii) To mobilize adequate financing in a sustainable manner for increasing rural water supply services.
- (xiv) To increase communities' participation in financing their water supply programs.

## **Policy Objectives and Strategies – Rural Water Supply**

### ***Policy objectives and strategies for Rural Water Supply address:***

1. Access to Reliable Water Supply
2. Community Participation including Choice of Technology
3. Sustainability of Operation and Maintenance
4. Domestic Water Supply Minimum Service
5. Water for Other Use
6. Development of Alternative Water Supply Techniques
7. Gender Sensitivity
8. Private Sector Participation
9. Monitoring and Evaluation
10. Community Ownership
11. Coordination and Collaboration
12. Financing Rural Water Supply Programs

### **1. Access to Reliable Water Supply**

**Objective:** To ensure sustainable provision of and access to portable water to rural communities.

**Strategies:**

- (i) The Government through SALWACO will continue to provide technical as well as financial support for the development of rural water supply schemes. SALWACO will be strengthened to efficiently perform its current responsibilities and rural water supply services, which were under Water Supply Division (WSD) and afterwards devolved to Local Councils.
- (ii) Identification of water schemes and their implementation will be demand-driven and community based. The strategy will provide for communities to gradually contribute towards the capital cost and ensure payment for operations, repair and replacement costs of their facilities, mindful of the need to ensure affordability, equity and fairness for the poor and vulnerable.

## **2. Community Participation**

### **Planning and ownership**

**Objective:** To ensure that communities participate fully in the planning and ownership of water supply schemes.

**Strategies:**

- (i) The new water legislation will provide for community ownership of rural water supply schemes.
- (ii) Legal registration of water user entities will be instituted to ensure that communities are the legal owners of their water supply schemes including water wells.
- (iii) Communities will be trained to acquire skills in planning, management and supervision of their water schemes.
- (iv) Participation will involve civil society at all levels.

### **Choice of Technology**

**Objective:** To have appropriate and affordable technology for rural water supply schemes.

**Strategies:**

- (i) During project planning and design, communities will be assisted to make appropriate technology choices that suit them and which require low investment costs and are least costly in operation and maintenance.
- (ii) Where possible, the responsible institution (NWRB) will standardise the technology, e.g. for water pumps.

## **3. Sustainability of Operation and Maintenance**

**Objective:** To ensure communities pay for operations and maintenance of services and schemes are managed effectively.

**Strategies:**

- (i) Communities will be assisted by Local Councils to establish mechanisms to pay for the costs of O&M costs. At the stage of project conception, the indicative magnitude of the O&M costs will be discussed with the communities to match the level of service and technology selected with the willingness and ability of the community to operate, maintain and manage the chosen option.
- (ii) The Government will provide sufficient support to institutions that train pump mechanics, operators and managers of community systems.
- (iii) Upon demand from the communities, the Local Councils will assist the communities to establish sustainable arrangements for spare parts for community water schemes, operation and maintenance tasks.
- (iv) Communities will be educated and facilitated to enable them to manage operations of water schemes. The Rural Water Supply Section of the Ministry responsible for water will take a leading coordinating role in collaboration with SALWACO, Local Councils, NGOs and Civil Society organisations.

#### **4. Domestic Water Supply Minimum Service**

**Objective:** To establish domestic water supply minimum service levels.

**Strategy:**

The Ministry responsible for water (Rural Water Supply Section) will expedite completion of determining the basic level of service for domestic water supply in rural areas in terms of portable water per capita per day which will also include distances of water points from the furthest homestead and persons served per outlet.

#### **5. Water for Other Use**

**Objective:** To provide adequate water for other rural economic activities.

**Strategy:**

Water usage other than domestic usage (e.g. water for livestock) will be included in rural water supply designs and areas for such usage shall be established in the provision of water supply services.

#### **6. Development of Alternative Water Supply Techniques**

**Objective:** To improve water availability to rural areas through the development of other water supply technologies such as rainwater harvesting.

**Strategies:**

- (i) Research on alternative water supply technologies including rainwater harvesting technology will be carried out.
- (ii) New technologies will be promoted through awareness and training of various stakeholders.

#### **7. Gender Sensitivity**

**Objective:** To encourage fair representation of women in planning, decision making and management of water schemes.

**Strategies:**

- (i) A programme to raise awareness of the importance of women's participation will be carried out. Women will be trained and empowered to actively participate at all levels in water programs including, planning, supervision, decision making and management.
- (ii) The Water and Sanitation Committees should be gender balanced.

#### **8. Private Sector Participation**

**Objective:** To promote participation of the private sector in the delivery of goods and services

**Strategies:**

- (i) Regulations pertaining to enhancing private sector participation in water supply services in rural areas will be established.
- (ii) Upon demand of the communities, Local Councils will advise communities on options to resolve their specific operational challenges including the involvement of the private sector and if necessary, assist communities in procuring sustainable operational arrangements.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Objective:** To develop appropriate mechanisms for monitoring rural water supply activities.

**Strategy:**

- (i) The Ministry responsible for water (Rural Water Supply section), in collaboration with Local councils will ensure that communities' monitoring capacity will be developed involving comprehensive reporting and feedback mechanisms.
- (ii) Participatory monitoring and evaluation will be carried out at the district and community levels.

## **10. Community Ownership**

**Objective:** To enable legal community ownership of rural water supply schemes.

**Strategies:**

- (i) As a principle, ownership of communities will be made legitimate in the new Water Law.
- (ii) Relevant regulations under which rural water user entities can be legally registered as owners will be established.

## **11. Co-ordination and Collaboration**

**Objective:** To establish fora for coordination and collaboration among various rural water stakeholders.

**Strategies:**

- (i) Relevant stakeholders will be identified and given roles and responsibilities for sector coordination and collaboration.
- 12. Well defined co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms accessible to all stakeholders will be established by the Ministry responsible for water (Rural water supply section).
- 13. Financing Rural Water Supply Programmes

**Objectives:**

- (i) To mobilize adequate financing in a sustainable manner for increasing rural water supply services.
- (ii) To increase communities' participation in financing their water supply programs.

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### **Strategies for Financing Rural Water Supply Programmes**

- (i) The Government gradually will continue<sup>1</sup> to play a leading role in financing water projects in rural areas.
- (ii) The Government will increase its sector funding through budgetary allocations.
- (iii) The Government will ensure Local Councils dedicate a portion of their funds for contribution to capital costs of water projects for poor and vulnerable communities.
- (iv) The traditional supply-driven approach will be replaced by a demand-responsive approach to service provision. Financial support for water supply will be initiated and requested by the respective communities themselves. The communities shall demonstrate their ability to sustain their schemes before they can access financial support.
- (v) Communities will establish mechanisms to contribute a portion of the capital costs in cash and in kind, for new schemes, for rehabilitation, replacement and systems expansion.









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