

# NATIONAL POLICY ON DRINKING WATER

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Drinking Water Sector

Safe water, suitable for human consumption is a scarce and a limited resource which is under threat of pollution, contamination and waste. This ever dwindling resource is indispensable for sustenance of life on the planet and in particular the well being of humans. Safe drinking water is considered a key factor contributing towards overall economic and social development of a country. Accordingly access to safe drinking water is considered as an inalienable right of the people.

The Government has assigned the top most priority for the provision of safe drinking water in achieving sustainable economic and social development. Sri Lanka too is committed to the United Nations (UN) Millennium declaration of halving by 2015, the percentage of people with no access to safe drinking water or lacking the means to obtain it.

### 1.2 Present Status

#### Safe Drinking Water

Water suitable for drinking from any source whether it is from dug well, tube well, rain water or pipe borne water (*protected and/ or treated*) is considered as safe drinking water. Before 1980, only 50% of the urban population and 56% of those in the rural areas had access to safe drinking water. Between 1990 and 2002, access to safe drinking water has increased from 91% to 99% in urban areas and from 62% to 72% in rural areas.

#### Pipe Borne Water

The water that is treated, processed and delivered to consumers through a pipe system is considered as piped borne water.

During 1980-1990, around 26% of the urban population had access to piped water supply and only 2% of the rural population had access to piped-water services. At present 75% of the urban population is served with piped water, but only 14% of the rural population benefits from piped water supply. Piped water supply where available could be characterized by irregular and intermittent supply, substandard quality, poor service coverage, and water losses.

Further there are significant disparities in availability, access, coverage and service level among provinces in both safe water for drinking and pipe borne water.

### 1.3 Challenges and Issues

The provision of safe drinking water adequately and equitably through dug wells, tube wells, rain water harvesting, rural water schemes and urban water schemes ensuring water safety at an affordable cost to all citizens is a major challenge faced by the drinking water sector.

The limitations of water resources to meet the ever increasing demand and pollution and contamination of water resources are contentious issues faced by the sector. The severe climatic changes, freak environmental conditions and longer drought spells globally experienced emphasizes the importance of catchment protection/ improvement water conservation, preservation, prudent utilization and the efficient management and sharing of water resources.

Future investment needed to achieve anticipated coverage is estimated to be substantial. Further the production cost, process and delivery cost too have been increasing gradually over the years. The development of a conducive environment to attract and harness the required investment for the sector development is considered a major challenge.

#### **1.4 Objective of the Policy**

The Policy aims at providing a direction to all stakeholders in the Drinking Water Sector in.

- i. Achieving the goals and objectives set by the government.
- ii. Resolving issues related to qualitative and quantitative aspects.
- iii. Promoting commitment of service providers and users for sustainable utilization of drinking water.

#### **1.5 Principles of the Policy**

The Policy is based on following underlined principles.

- i. Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right with commensurate responsibilities on the recipients.
- ii. Planning and development will be people centered, participatory and demand responsive.
- iii. The government acts as the custodian for the protection and proper management of drinking water resources.
- iv. Abstraction of water and the protection of the resource shall be carried out in recognition of downstream impacts.
- v. Where issues arise relating to competing demands, drinking water needs will have priority over the others, with reasonable consideration for other important needs.
- vi. Development of drinking water supplies and distribution of water to people shall be done efficiently and equitably.
- vii. Piped water supplies will be provided to populations/communities where other supply arrangements are inadequate.
- viii. The operational activities will be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level, giving due consideration to the capacity and efficiency.
- ix. Water safety will be practiced at all levels and ensured by all parties.

#### **1.6 Scope of the Policy**

The scope covered under this Policy aims at developing a broad set of strategies to promote the growth of the drinking water sector in terms of the coverage quality as well as the service delivery. This policy too aims at providing guidance to all the actors involved in the sector including the Ministry of Water Supply & Drainage, the NWSDB, Provincial Councils & Local Authorities, Lending Institutions, External Supporting Agencies, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and last but not the least, the user.

The policy covers institutional arrangements, cost recovery, investment, conservation, source protection, service level, R&D, quality assurance and regulatory aspects. The scope of this policy embraces the newly classified user groups such as the conflict affected, internally displaced and the estate workers.

Within the water sector, two sub sectors could be distantly demarcated, namely “**rural water supply sub sector**” and “**urban water sub sector**”.

### **Rural Water Supply Sub Sector**

A rural water supply policy document has been approved by the Cabinet in year 2001 with the main focus on the rural water supply & sanitation sub sector. The rural water supply & sanitation policy comprehensively addresses the rural water supply aspects coming under the purview of mainly the Provincial Councils, Local Authorities and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The service provision for this sub sector is by way of dug wells, tube wells, rain water harvesting and small scale rural piped water supply items.

### **Urban Water Supply Sub Sector**

The urban water supply mainly focus on provision of piped borne water supply to towns, cities, urban centres, industries and suburban areas. The key actors in the urban water supply sector will be Ministry in charge of Water Supply, the National Water Supply & Drainage Board (NWDB), Provincial Councils, Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas.

## **2.0 VISION STATEMENT**

*“Drinking Water Supply Policy envisions a healthy society that values the safety of drinking water and is committed for its sustainable use”*

## **3.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

### *Policy*

Build a well coordinated and structured institutional set up which will ensure efficient and effective service delivery ensuring water safety and long term sustainability of rural and urban sub sectors.

The key roles of the main actors in the sector will be as follows;

### **3.1 The Government**

**The Government will;**

- Ensure all citizens have access to safe drinking water.
- Approve necessary policies and legislation for the sub sectors.
- Approve and update the national policy, as and when necessary.
- Regulate sector development and management activities.
- Establish guidelines to ensure efficient use, equity, transparency and accountability.
- Provide funds in terms of capital investment and funds for sector development activities.

- Secure external funding for sector development and co-ordinate with such external funding agencies.
- Promote decentralization and devolution of responsibility to appropriate local and regional levels.
- Promote the sub-sector devolution activities with the involvement of all stakeholders.
- Determine and Regulate water entitlement and allocation functions.
- Development and enactment of legislation required for the sector.
- Sanction and regulate the cost recovery systems.

### **3.2 The Ministry of Water Supply**

The Ministry in charge of drinking water is the apex body for policy formulation, enacting and enforcing the legislation and directing the investment programme and coordination among stakeholders. The Ministry of Water Supply & Drainage is directly responsible and reports to the central Government.

Initiate legal action for water source pollution and contamination.

#### **The Ministry will;**

- Formulate the national policy in collaboration with the Government.
- Enforce the strategies as stipulated in the national policy.
- Make necessary policy adjustments, as and when necessary.
- Facilitate with the government to secure internal and external funding for sector development and co-ordinate with such external financiers.
- Monitor the sub-sector development activities in coordination with all relevant stakeholders.
- Initiate watershed/source protection programmes with other stakeholders.
- Enact the cost recovery systems sanctioned by the government.
- Coordinate, monitor and promote sub sector development activities.
- Approve the cost recovery proposals submitted by the pipe borne water supply sub sector.
- Coordinate and liaise among all stakeholders in sector development activities.
- Receive and manage funds provided by the Government for sector development activities.
- Hold the financial responsibility for the funds received from the Government.

### **3.3 The National Water Supply & Drainage Board (NWSDB)**

The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB), which functions under the Ministry in charge of drinking water is the principal authority for providing *piped borne* drinking water facilities. The Board Act empowers the NWSDB to design, construct and manage piped borne water supply projects in all part of the country. Apart from the NWSDB will also provide technical assistance to other stakeholders/ agencies involved in the sector.

#### **The NWSDB will,**

- Undertake design, construction and operation of small, medium and major pipe borne water supply schemes.
- Provide technical assistance to other stakeholders in all technical aspects.

- Develop macro level development and investment plans for pipe water supply sub sector.
- Build partnerships in operational areas to enhance service levels.
- Enforce decentralization to enhance transparent and efficient management.
- Prepare cost recovery structures and systems to ensure sustainability of the piped water sector.
- Gradually decentralize operational, planning, designs and construction functions to the regions. The centre will retain core activities expertise such as designs, R&D and based on policy setting activities.
- Transfer the operation and maintenance function of rural water supply schemes and small scale water supply schemes to local authorities and community based organizations.
- Maintenance of data base on water quality and quantity.
- Initiate legal action against water source pollution.
- Implement water shed water source protection programmes.

### **3.4 Other Agencies**

The Local Authorities carries the responsibility for provision of rural water supply in their particular Local Authority areas. Apart from Local Authorities the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) too are involved in the provision of drinking water facilities.

In addition to the Local Authorities and Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non Government Organizations (NGOs) too are involved in provision of drinking water through small and medium scale schemes. Further the Municipal Councils and Urban Councils too are involved in providing drinking water in these respective Local Authority areas.

The government will establish entities such as the Common Water Supply and Sanitation Project (CWSSP) to address specific issues and to develop particular areas. The government will mandate and assign the responsibility for such special entities and units to operate within the water sector with specific government approval.

#### **3.4.1 Provincial Councils**

**Provincial Councils will,**

- Enact the rural water supply and sanitation policy in coordination with Local Authorities.
- Facilitate resource mobilization, technical support, training, capacity building and other related activities for the rural water supply sub sector.
- Co-ordinate the planning and implementation of small and medium rural water supply schemes, implemented and managed by Local Authorities.
- Authorize and sanction the cost recovery proposals put forward by the Local Authorities. Water shed/water source protection and improvements.
- Monitor the rural water supply sub sector development activities.
- Promote the investment, development and sustainable management of the rural water supply sub sector.
- Make decisions on resource allocation and optimize the resources among Local Authorities.
- Prepare policies, guidelines and strategies for all sector development activities in the rural water supply and sanitation sub sector.

- Establish a mechanism for conflict resolution and settlement of disputes.
- Liaise and coordinate with the government and other stake holders in rural water supply and sanitation sub sector activities.
- Carry out water quality surveillance programmes.
- Legal action against pollution and contamination.

### 3.4.2 Local Authorities

Local Authorities will,

- Undertake planning, design and implementation of small and medium rural water supply schemes.
- Undertake the operation and maintenance of small and medium scale water schemes.
- Ensure quality and standards of services.
- Develop partnerships for operations and maintenance activities.
- Build Partnerships to enhance the service delivery.
- Facilitate the CBOs in implementing and managing the water supply systems and provide the necessary technical assistance to CBOs.
- Ensure environmental harmony in all development activities.
- Recovery of costs involved in service provision to ensure the sustainability of the sub sector.

### 3.5 The User

The User (Community) will,

- Actively participate in ensuring water safety.
- Coordinate and participate with the service provider in sector development activities.
- Actively participate and contribute toward preservation, protection and conservation of water resources.
- Actively participate and collaborate with awareness campaigns launched by the service providers.
- Actively participate and contribute during the planning, design and construction stages of a project.
- Implement and manage community water supply schemes by forming Community Based Organizations (CBOs).
- Recognize the value of the service and contribute towards the cost recovery to sustain the service.

## 4.0 INVESTMENT

### Policy

**Allocate limited investment available based on social and economic considerations to ensure equitable distribution of investment across the country, through an appropriate prioritization criteria.**

### Strategies

- Investment will be prioritized based on parameters such as population density, demand, per capita investment, health impacts, coverage levels, social factors, environmental factors and economic aspects.

- Investment needs shall be identified and investment programme shall be prepared by the Line Agencies [NWSDB, Local Authorities (Urban Councils/ Pradeshiya Sabhas)].
- Investment needs shall be assessed taking into account the targets for increasing coverage and improving quality of service.
- The Ministry in charge of Water Supply and the Provincial Councils shall be responsible for securing the investment for the sector.
- The government will secure and provide the capital requirement through suitable sources.
- A conducive environment shall be developed to build investor confidence and to secure investment from alternative sources.
- The Ministry in charge of water and the provincial councils shall be accountable to the government for the disbursement of funds.
- Transparent and accountable systems shall be enforced for the disbursement of funds by all parties.
- The government shall provide the necessary subsidy on capital, in consideration of social and economic benefits derived from water supply infrastructure development.
- Appropriate partnerships shall be encouraged to attract investment to the sector.
- Investment in water supply and sanitation shall be integrated wherever possible.
- Investment shall include reasonable and adequate provisions for water source and catchment protection and improvements.

## 5.0 COST RECOVERY

### Policy

**Maintain and sustain the service delivery through a transparent cost recovery mechanism by increasing productivity and reducing cost of production and water losses, while ensuring affordability to the low-income segments.**

### Strategies

- There will not be any cost or charge imposed on water resources freely available in nature.
- When there is no processing or delivery cost involved, access to such safe drinking water will be free of charge.
- The cost involved in protecting, processing and delivery of water will be recovered while ensuring adequate quantity at affordable cost is would available to all.

- The following cost components of processing and delivery will be recovered through a service charge.
  - capital cost and interest incurred
  - operation and maintenance cost
  - replacement and rehabilitation cost
- In consideration of the lifeline requirement a subsidy shall be provided to the poor and marginalized communities.
- The cost recovery system shall be applicable and be implemented uniformly within respective administrative boundaries.

## **6.0 CONSERVATION & PROTECTION**

### **Policy**

**Adopt a holistic approach for source water shed and catchment protection and prevent pollution, ensure adequate supply, encourage conservation, reclaim and reuse water, and minimize the impact of wastewater discharges on the environment.**

### *Strategies*

- Public awareness campaigns on water demand management, water conservation and saving will be conducted on a regular basis.
- In times of water scarcity, drinking water allocation shall have priority over other users.
- Initiate all necessary steps for water shed/ catchment protection activities engaging other stake holders and launching and conducting programmes to educate the public of the importance of catchment protection and preservation.
- Encourage the reuse and re-processing of water and the use of alternative water sources for non- consumptive purposes.
- Promote resource protection and conservation at all times through regulation and enhancement of necessary laws.

## **7.0 SERVICE LEVEL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Policy**

**Enhance the quality of service provision by way of improving operational and system efficiency.**

### *Strategies*

- Introduce and periodically update necessary procedural and administrative systems to enhance the efficiency of all operational systems.

- Introduce and periodically update manuals, standards (*water quality standards etc.*) and norms to be on par with the best industry standards.
- Introduce necessary programmes to reduce water losses and improve the efficiency of the water production and distribution systems to enhance system efficiency.
- Carry out beneficiary awareness programmes, where applicable, and encourage consumer participation in the execution of programmes, wherever possible.

## 8.0 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

### Policy

**Improve quality of service through sustained research and development programmes, to harness new knowledge, focusing on measures to regenerate drinking water sources, prevent pollution, reduce non - revenue losses, increase efficiency by adopting appropriate technologies.**

### Strategies

- Research will be focused to overcome the major constraints in achieving the sector goals in service coverage and service level improvements.
- Appropriate budgetary allocations will be made for research and development activities.
- Encourage and promote new ground breaking R&D activities by providing incentives.
- Research and Development (R&D) shall be extended to social and economic fields and consumer needs and consumer related development aspects.
- Develop new water treatment techniques.

## 9.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE & CAPACITY BUILDING

### Policy

**Maintain and enhance the quality of products and services by improving the capacity of service providers.**

### Strategies

- The service providers shall comply with the service level standards set by the designated regulator.
- The service providers will ensure compliance to national drinking water standards, set by the designated authority.
- A certification programme shall be developed and implemented for water quality testing laboratories.
- A quality assurance programme for materials used by the service provider will be developed and implemented.

- Water safety plans shall be designed and put into practice as a continuous on going programme.
- A programme will be launched to enhance the capacity of the service provider to match best industry practices.

## 10.0 REGULATIONS

### Policy

**Ensure the welfare of the consumer, while ensuring the sustainability of the service provider, through technical and economic regulation.**

### Strategies

- The service providers shall be subjected to technical and economic regulations to ensure consumer welfare.
- The cost recovery structure and the system shall be subjected to economic regulation to ensure the consumer welfare, while ensuring the sustainability of the service provider.
- Technical regulation will cover service quality, water quality, and consumer protection to ensure compliance to standards.

## 11.0 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

### Policy

**Institutionalize the emergency and disaster relief function to handle disaster situations effectively and efficiently.**

### Strategies

- Enhance awareness among all service providers on disaster management and build capacity by developing procedures and by conducting training programmes.
- Demarcation of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder's involved in relief work and the establishment of clear coordination mechanisms.
- Launching capacity building programmes for the service providers to build their capacity towards efficient and effective disaster management practices.
- Install a coordination mechanism among all service providers, government and non governmental organizations, civil societies etc. to avoid duplication of activities.
- Launch a donor coordination programme and develop mechanisms for the effective and optimum utilization of donor funds.