

NATIONAL DRINKING WATER POLICY

Part A

1. Preamble

The National Drinking Water Policy provides a framework for addressing the key issues and challenges facing the country's water supply sector in the provision of safe water supply to the people of Sri Lanka. Safe water is an essential pre-requisite for better health and socio economic development.

Increasing demands from a growing population, competing uses of water in an expanding economy, mounting evidence of environmental degradation, rising costs of development of new supplies, increased pollution from urbanization, lack of policies and institutional constraints, diverse public perceptions about the value of water and increasing cost of development are critical issues in meeting targets in the water supply sector. The policy aims at addressing these issues through inclusive strategies and broader vision.

2. Background

Sri Lanka's continued efforts to improve its social development indicators have placed the country ahead of most other South Asian countries. Provision of drinking water supply is a government priority and targets have been set periodically with regards to population access to safe drinking water. On a nation-wide basis, piped water systems and protected wells deliver safe water to almost 90% of the urban population and 60% of the rural population. Piped water is supplied to 31% of the population at present which is over 6 million people. Tube wells provide water to a population of more than 2 million (10% percent). In addition, 27 percent of the population living in rural areas has been provided with safe drinking water through protected dug wells. Accordingly, 90 percent of the urban population and 60 percent of the rural population are provided with safe drinking water facilities. The proportion of households with access to an improved water supply is about 76% at present which was 71 percent in 2004. However, disparities in service coverage across regions are still prominent, despite the massive investments made during the last few decades in the water sector.

Although Sri Lanka has a better record in the water supply sector in terms of population coverage with improved water supply, compared to the other countries in the region, the challenges remain to be maintenance of the services to the current users and extension of services to the un-served population which is estimated over 3 million at present.

3. Objectives of the Policy

National Drinking Water Policy provides a broad frame work and policy guidelines for improving national service coverage in safe water through mobilization of efforts and resources of all stakeholders of the sector.

4. Goal

The Government of Sri Lanka, while recognizing that access to safe drinking water is a basic right of every citizen, is committed to the provision of adequate quantity of safe drinking water to the entire population at an affordable cost and in an equitable, efficient and sustainable manner.

5. Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to potable water supplied for human consumption including qualitative and quantitative aspects. It does not apply to bottled water.

6. Policy Principles

- a. Access to safe drinking water is a basic right with commensurate responsibilities on the recipients.
- b. Planning and development of water supply will follow people centered, participatory and demand responsive approaches.
- c. Abstraction of water from rivers and streams for domestic purposes will be carried out in recognition of (without prejudice to) downstream needs.
- d. The Government will act as the custodian of the water resources and manage such resources on behalf of the people in an effective efficient and equitable manner, consistent with the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations.
- e. Water for domestic purposes will receive priority over other uses, subject to implementation of any previous agreement for other uses.
- f. Investment in drinking water supply development will be based on priority needs regardless of social standing or geographical location.
- g. Pipe-borne water supply option will only be considered when all other cost effective options are not feasible.
- h. The operational responsibilities will be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level with due consideration to management capacity.

- i. Safety of drinking Water supplied to the people need to be ensured at all times by all water service agencies through adoption of appropriate instruments.

7. Sub Sectors

Two sub-sectors could be identified for the purpose of applying this policy in the water supply sector namely **“rural water supply sub sector”** and **“urban water Supply sub sector”**.

Rural Water Supply Sub Sector

A policy document has been approved for the rural water supply and sanitation sub sector by the cabinet in the year 2001. The rural water supply & sanitation policy comprehensively addresses the rural water supply aspects coming under the purview of mainly the provincial councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas. The drinking water services for this sub sector is mainly by way of dug wells, tube wells, rain water harvesting and small scale rural piped water supply systems.

Urban Water Supply Sub Sector

The urban water supply services focuses mainly on provision of piped borne water supply to urban areas as defined by towns, cities, urban centres, industries and some suburban areas. Urban water supplies will be under the purview of the ministries responsible for such services and for their operation by the relevant local authorities.

Vision Statement

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

Part B

1.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The institutional arrangements will be structured to ensure effective coordination, communication and collaboration for maximizing synergies in the development and maintenance of water services to all users in accordance with sound public utility practice.

The role of the government and key agencies involved in the provision of services in the water supply sector is required to be identified with their respective responsibilities in order to translate this policy into action.

1.1 The Government

The Government through the Ministry in charge of water supply will;

- Ensure all citizens have access to safe drinking water.
- Formulate policies, laws and legislations to guide development partners operating agencies at national provincial and district level in order to meet the standards in terms of quality and quantity of water supplied to the public.
- Take the lead role in coordination of activities among all stakeholders and provide a platform for institutional collaboration for maximizing efforts and mobilizing resources.
- Establish guidelines to ensure efficient use of resources adopting principles of equity, transparency and accountability.
- Promote Investments and allocate budget provisions as needed for sector development in order to meet the targets.
- Promote decentralization and devolution of responsibilities to appropriate provincial regional and local levels in consultation with relevant parties.
- Promote domestic water as the priority.
- Promote social environmental and institutional sustainability.
- Approve projects and programmes according to the government policy.
- Establish programmes or entities when necessary to focus on particular needs and situations, similar to the setting up of the community water supply and sanitation project (CWSSP) with a mandate to establish an appropriate policy framework for the rural water supply sub-sector.

1.2 The National Water Supply & Drainage Board (NWSDB)

The principle agency responsible for development, operation and maintenance of drinking water supplies is the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB), which functions under the ministry in charge of drinking water. The NWSDB, established under an act of parliament in 1975 is mandated to engage in development, service provision and regulate quality standards of designs and water supplied to the public.

The NWSDB will,

- Be responsible for design, construction and operation of small, medium and major pipe borne water supply schemes.

- Provide technical assistance to other stakeholders on all technical aspects.
- Develop macro level development and investment plans for piped water supplies.
- Build partnerships in operational areas to enhance service levels and build capacity of small scale operators for sustainability.
- Promote decentralization to enhance management at the lowest appropriate level for transparent and efficient management.
- Prepare financial management systems to ensure sustainability of the piped water sector.
- Transfer the operation and maintenance function of rural water supply schemes and small scale water supply schemes to local authorities and community based organizations.
- Maintain a data base on access to water supplies, water quality, etc.
- Promote and actively involve in water source /catchments protection programmes "

1.3 Other Agencies

Non governmental organizations have acted and will continue to act as proxies for communities and have also developed medium and small scale water supply systems for communities. At times they have mobilized the funds needed and will continue to do so. However in all such activities they will be guided by government policy and practice, be accountable and provide all statistical information to the government to facilitate planning and monitoring of progress in the sub-sector.

1.3.1 Provincial Councils

Provincial Councils will,

Since drinking water is a devolved subject under the constitution the policy aims at building capacity of local and provincial agencies for self sustaining drinking water supplies.

- Assist the rural water supply sub sector development activities.
- Promote investment, development and sustainable management of water supplies in the province.
- Liaise and coordinate with the government and other stake holders.
- Ensure sustainable management of water supplies by local authorities.
- Promote and actively involve in conservation and effective management of water sheds to ensure sustainable use of water for the communities "

1.3.2 Local Authorities

Local Authorities will,

- Be responsible for planning, design and implementation of small and medium water supply schemes including operation and maintenance according to sound public utility practice.
- Ensure quality and acceptable standards in the operation and maintenance of small and medium scale water schemes.
- Develop partnerships with the users for operations and maintenance activities to enhance service delivery.
- Provide the necessary technical assistance to CBOs, where needed, for implementing and managing the water supply systems.
- Promote and actively involve in water resources and catchments protection through participatory approach”
- Ensure environmental harmony in all development activities.
- Ensure technical feasibility and financial viability of water supply systems.
- Promote water resources and catchments protection through participatory approach.

1.4 The Beneficiaries

The responsibilities and commitment of users will be promoted to ensure uninterrupted services in a sustainable manner. Improve awareness of the water users on the limitation of scarce water resources and protection of sources through proper environmental management.

The beneficiaries will,

- Actively participate in ensuring water safety.
- Collaborate with the service provider in keeping with their responsibilities to ensure the sustainability of the service.
- Actively participate and contribute toward preservation, protection and conservation of water resources.
- Actively participate and collaborate with the service providers on awareness raising campaigns.
- Promote participatory approach and contribute during the planning, design and construction stages of a project.
- In certain circumstances, they may form community based organizations (CBOs) to plan, implement and manage their community water supply systems.

2.0 FINANCING OF DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES

Policy

Allocate available resources based on social and economic considerations to ensure equitable distribution of investments for water supply services across the country, adopting appropriate prioritization criteria.

Strategies

- Prioritization of investments will be based on need, health imperatives, population density, per capita investment and financial viability, economic benefits, social factors and environmental sustainability factors.
- Investments will also be guided by commitments to goals and conventions. The needs shall be assessed taking into account the targets for increasing coverage and improving quality of service.
- A conducive environment will be developed to build investor confidence and to encourage investments from multiple sources.
- Disbursement and use of funds shall follow principles of transparency and accountability.
- Funding of water supply systems will include reasonable and adequate provisions for water source and catchment protection and improvements, for water quality surveillance, human resources development and research.
- The Government will subsidize or provide subsidies where necessary on considerations of social and economic necessities. Subsidies in all cases will be targeted to the needy.
- Appropriate partnerships will be encouraged to attract investment to the sector.
- Investment in water supply will be integrated with sanitation wherever possible.

3.0 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Policy

Financial sustainability need to be ensured for an interrupted services through adoption of a affordable and acceptable tariff system.

Strategies

- Charges for water will apply only where there is a cost.
- An adequate quantity of drinking water at affordable cost will be available to all
- The following cost components for protecting, processing and delivery will be recovered through a service charge.
 - Capital cost and interest incurred

- Operation and maintenance cost
- Replacement and rehabilitation cost
- A lifeline requirement will be available to the poor through a subsidies targeted to the poor.
- Financial sustainability principles will apply uniformly across the country.

4.0 WATER SOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND WATER CONSERVATION

Policy

A holistic approach for water source, water shed and catchment protection will be adopted to prevent pollution depletion of the resource to ensure adequate supply of water through proper environmental conservation.

Strategies

- Public awareness programmes will be carried out by the stakeholders on water shed, management and catchment protection, to protect the sources from encroachments, misuse and pollution.
- Effective public awareness programmes will be carried out regularly to promote and ensure water demand management and conservation. Conservation will also include rainwater harvesting and use, reclaim and reuse, prevention of pollution, and use of alternate sources for non-consumptive purposes.
- Promote incentives for conservation and efficient use of resources through appropriate measures consistent with other policies and programmes.

5.0 IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES

Policy

Enhance the quality of services provision by continuous assessments and improving operational and system efficiency.

Strategies

- Establish key performance indicators and continuous assessment of consumer satisfaction and feed back for improvement of services.
- Planners and providers of drinking water programmes and supplies will develop adequate in-house capability in understanding social needs and issues of the public.

- Those without access to improved drinking water supplies will be given priority in future developments. Improvement of services for the estate population, the internally displaced and the differently able will receive special attention.
- Periodically update procedural and develop standard operating procedures (SOP) to enhance the efficiency of operations.
- Update manuals, standards (*water quality standards etc.*) and norms to be on par with the best management practices adopted by public utilities.
- Introduce programmes to reduce non- revenue water and improve the efficiency of the infrastructure used for water production and distribution.
- Carry out awareness raising programmes for beneficiaries and encourage consumer participation in the execution of programmes, wherever possible.

6.0 CAPACITY BUILDING RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Policy

Promote research in developing innovative ideas for continuous improvement of cost effectiveness and efficient use of resources in the provision of water services. Build capacity to develop professional standards required to address issues related to safe water in the changing socio economic environment.

Strategies

Research will be undertaken to:

- **Promote water saving technologies**, through improved system designs and services, and optimize benefits from available resources and assets.
- Promote extension of services to un served population through affordable solutions.
- Towards adoption of a user-friendly and lower cost water treatment plants.
- To find innovative means to reduce the cost of development and investments required to achieve the sector goals.

7.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE & CAPACITY BUILDING

Policy

Enhance the quality of products and services by improving compliance with standards and guidelines.

Strategies

- The service providers shall comply with the service level standards set by the designated regulator.
- The service providers will ensure compliance with national drinking water standards.
- Guidelines will be developed for accreditation of water testing laboratories for water quality testing and reporting.
- A quality assurance process will be adopted on materials used for construction.
- A programme will be launched to enhance the capacity of the service providers to match best industry practices.
- Water Safety Plans (WSP) required to be operationalised by all service providers in order to ensure that the water supplied to the public is safe at all times.

8.0 REGULATION

Policy

The Ministry responsible for water supply will issue from time to time regulations related to maintenance of water services in order to protect qualitative and quantitative aspects of drinking water.

Strategies

- The service providers required to ensure adherence to technical and financial regulation to ensure the welfare of the consumer.
- Regulations and laws will be reviewed time to time in order to protect infrastructures related to water services and maintenance of services.
- Technical regulation will cover service quality, water quality, and consumer protection to ensure compliance to standards and principles in accordance with sound engineering practices.

9.0 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Disaster risk reduction and preparedness in terms of provision of basic water needs for the affected population due to floods droughts, landslides and manmade distastes need special attention. Policy will promote a government lead approach to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts of humanitarian agencies to be established.

Policy

Ensure maintenance of basic water for drinking and hygienic purposes during emergencies caused by disasters.

Strategies

- Promote incorporation of disaster preparedness in the water supply sector at District level and coordinate with other relevant agencies, such as Disaster Management Center and District Administration to mobilize resources.
- Coordinate all activities during emergencies to provide relief assistance to affected population.
- Promote awareness of all service providers regarding the established institutional structure at national and district level for the management of disasters.
- Sector lead agency for water supply will be established to provide a platform for coordination of all activities of agencies involved during disasters for effective care and relief.
- Promote institutional development and capacity building for service providers for efficient and effective management of disasters.

Develop mechanisms for effective donor coordination and optimum utilization of donor funds.

- Establish a separate fund for disaster preparedness to cover production and delivery costs of emergency drinking water supplies.
- Establish or adopt accepted standards to maintain basic water services to affected population during disasters