

## **NATIONAL POLICY ON DRINKING WATER (19/jan/2024)**

**1. Policy name: National Policy on Drinking Water**

**2. Effective date – March 2024**

**3. Introduction**

### **I. BACKGROUND**

Water is life and access to drinking water is a human right.

Sri Lanka is one of the few developing countries in South Asia, providing universal health care and free education to its people. Successive Governments have implemented welfare-oriented policies which have enabled Sri Lanka to achieve a relatively high standard of social and health development in comparison with countries having similar levels of development. As a result, the country has made a significant improvement in social welfare. Sri Lanka presently is placed high in the Human Development Index (HDI), life expectancy and literacy rate, comparing favourably with countries with similar development levels.

The present population of Sri Lanka has been estimated to be about 23 million, of which, about 23% live in urban cities, 73% in rural areas and about 4% in the estate areas.

Access to safe water supply services increased from about 76% in 2006 to nearly 93% by 2022, and the annual average expenditure associated was about Rupees 100 billion. However, of this population with water supply services, those with access to safely managed water supply services (ie, piped water supply, protected wells, and rainwater harvested systems) is about 66 % in urban areas and areas having urbanised characteristics, about 60 % of the rural areas and about 46 % of the estate population. Further improvement in coverage of improved water supply services will need greater investments.

Accelerated attention in developing drinking water supply services to the underserved urban and rural sector, is indicative. Particular attention will be necessary for the needs of remote and marginalised communities living in areas without adequate access to water supply services at present.

Migration to cities and neighbouring areas, attracted by economic opportunities, has resulted in about 57 % of the country population living in urban or semi-urban areas. Their aspirations are for better housing and improved utility services such as water supply and sanitation, akin to those in the urban sector.

Drinking water is presently supplied by many agencies of the central and local governments, by community -based organisations (CBOs), private sector organisations and some Pradeshiya Sabhas. The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB-State agency) has specific responsibility for providing the bulk of safely managed water supply. The responsibility to ensure that adequate water supply and sanitation facilities are in place in their respective areas of authority belongs to the Municipal Councils (MCs), the Urban Councils (UCs) and Pradeshiya Sabhas (PSs).

Many households have installed individual systems such as protected wells, rainwater harvesting tanks at their own cost or financed with assistance from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Drinking water is also supplied by many commercial organisations, mostly in bottle form.

Water resources are not evenly distributed across the country and some areas are without perennial water sources. Temporal and climatic variations are also an issue. Water resources have also had limitations resulting from natural and manmade causes. Increased urbanisation, misuse, and pollution of the water sources by many, have further exacerbated the situation.

Restructuring and rearrangement of agencies responsible for activities in the water sector is in the offing and will be beneficial. The Government is in the process of establishing a National Water Resources Council placed under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office. It is expected to have within its area of responsibility, managing competing demands for water and allocation of water, based on established priorities.

To identify and attend to risks related to the quality of source raw water for adoption for drinking water post treatment, the government developed a National Water Safety Policy, built upon previous collaboration with the World Health Organisation. Multi agency mechanisms at the local and regional level for associated operational activities are in place. For monitoring and support of such activities a Water Quality Surveillance Committee System (WQSCS) has been agreed between the relevant Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Health.

The responsibility for assuring the quality of drinking water supplied by water providers (government and others), relies with the Ministry of Health and is guided by the standards established by the Sri Lanka Institute of Standards (SLS 614). They are in keeping with guidelines recommended by the World Health Organisation. The Ministry of Health is responsible for quality assurance needs of many food items and the assurance of the quality of drinking water is one amongst them. In pursuance, the Ministry of Health has within its structure an arrangement to specifically monitor the quality of all drinking water supplied in the country and for administering the WQSCS.

The two major central government agencies responsible for activities related to the provision of potable water are the NWSDB and the Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS). NWSDB has all round management strength and technical expertise in water supply development and management. The DNCWS has greater knowledge of rural needs including the care and maintenance of drinking water supply services and works through CBOs established for the purpose.

It would be rational to develop the respective institutional structure, operational mode and human resources needed of the NWSDB and DNCWS accordingly, to complement each other and serve the communities better. Given the strengths and knowledge of these two agencies, they can be formidable collectively in increasing coverage of drinking water supply to the rural and estate sector. Since both are under the same Ministry, coordination will be facilitated. For effective collaboration, needed will be specific and clear demarcation of responsibilities according to their respective knowledge strengths and a modus operandi to suit.

At present, the water supply to estate communities is provided mainly by the Estate Management, sometimes funded by international donor agencies and NGOs. The operation and maintenance of

these schemes is arranged for by the estate management, with guidance of the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT). Recently, the Estate Worker Housing Cooperative Societies (EWHCS), a welfare organization consisting of workers and management have become involved in the management of these facilities, under the guidance of the PHDT and promoted by an on-going World Bank assisted project. Water User Committees (WUC) is formed as sub-committees under the EWHCS, thus getting their legal authority under the Cooperative Societies Act.

The water tariff system adopted by the key central government agency -NWSDB-responsible for managing the bulk of potable water supply, particularly in the urban areas and semi -urban areas is unique to Sri Lanka. It is not designed and structured to address the financial viability of each water supply system, under its purview, but all of them taken together. The system helps cross subsidies amongst communities and from industrial and commercial uses.

In the absence of regular tariff adjustments to meet costs and obligations, it has run the risk of having to draw funds from the Treasury and commercial banks to make ends meet. Tariff adjustments have been subject to political decisions which lead to cumbersome processes resulting in difficult and delayed decisions. Tariff decisions therefore have been few and far between in the past. Additionally delayed adjustments require sudden big increases which are difficult for the customers to adjust to. The State agencies supplying potable water are not breaking even, financially. The obtaining status may not be sympathetic with the conditions of the major international financial institutions on financial management and could stymie resource mobilisation. A salutary approach is being considered presently by the Government to obviate the issue, through delegating the decision jointly to the Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, adopting a tariff adjustment formula and procedure to follow.

Review of the level (sophistication) of water supply service to be provided may require early consideration, if to meet the goal of universal access to drinking water supply with due consideration to available funds. The Country may not be able to meet extensive development of reticulated piped water supply to most, as earlier planned. A change to selectively provide reticulated piped water supply for some and moderate and acceptable services such as protected wells, rainwater harvested supply, to others, may need evaluation. The cost of safely managed water supply such as protected wells particularly in thinly populated areas not amenable to reticulated piped water supply services, are usually borne by the household. They may be provided type designs and some technical assistance.

The incidence of chronic kidney disease of unknown aetiology (CKDU), not related to diabetes and in many instances adduced to the consumption of ground water in certain areas have presented in recent times, an exceptionally devastating issue. The alternative of supplying treated water, piped or with bowsers to thinly spread- out settlements such as where the problem mostly is, will be very expensive. Rainwater harvesting will provide a viable option but requires development of systems to harvest water strategically and needs stronger state institutional support. The absence of which has resulted in households adopting a point source with more sophisticated energy dependant water treatment equipment to support. Alternative arrangements to help move away from that option, is worthy of consideration.

The growing demand for water, calls for greater attention for conservation and pollution control. These are mostly people centred activities which require well - planned and executed awareness raising programmes by the relevant agencies ,supported by the government. The evidence is that, both pollution of groundwater and mining of groundwater sources has occurred, both of which require strong State monitoring and control.

Rainwater harvesting presently remains mostly in the domain of ‘roof top” harvesting for domestic needs but needs to progress to the larger domain of artificial recharge of groundwater aquifers. Strengthening State responsibility for research, technical advice and awareness rising on rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge of groundwater aquifers is necessary.

Care and maintenance of drinking water services in schools, an important responsibility and educational activity for growing children, has been an institutional issue. The issue requires State attention.

Given that there are many agencies (State and others) performing at different levels and responsible for different aspects of providing drinking water, effective coordination and collaboration amongst all, is imperative to ensure:

- the quantity and quality of drinking water for all;
- no one is left behind;
- water supply systems are well managed.

Well prepared and timely coordination meetings chaired by the Ministry will greatly assist in this endeavour.

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## **II. NEED**

A National Policy is required to provide legitimacy and authority and the institutional support to expedite commencement of coordinated and collaborative action and to have the required framework and mechanisms in active and effective operation, to meet the goal of universal access to drinking water.

## **III. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT**

Adequate access to potable water is an essential pre-requisite for life, better health and for socio-economic enhancement. Ensuring water security is critical. The need is to create a consciousness amongst the people and the formal and non-formal agencies on the challenges and vulnerability of water resources in the wake of increasing climate change impacts. Mobilization of the efforts and resources of all the sector stakeholders will be needed to overcome challenges due to climate change.

The country envisages that the demand for potable water will increase with the growth of population and other competing demands, enhanced also by a planned strategy for growth by the government and others. In pursuance of and for the preparation needed for, meeting such needs, the Government has directed that a National Policy for Drinking Water be prepared, for providing direction and authority.

A National Policy for Drinking Water will help:

- raise awareness all round, on the value of water and the responsibilities of all;
- draw more attention to the need for conservation and pollution abatement;
- raise awareness on the effects that climate change will have on the quantity and quality of the available water sources and support arrangements to minimize the effects of climate change;
- appreciate the priorities for allocation of available water resources;
- support the institutional arrangements needed; and the associated responsibilities; and
- boost greater coordination and collaboration

It will guide institutions concerned and people, in meeting the multitude of needs and issues in a systematic and rational manner. The policy will serve as an instrument for bringing about the strong accountability and collaboration that is imperative for progress and the achievement of needed inputs and outcomes. It will direct attention to where action will be needed and when and by whom.

#### **IV. RATIONALE**

A well-defined policy framework, supported by institutional arrangements in line and appropriate terms of reference in an environment of financial credibility, are prerequisites for mobilisation of needed resources.

##### **4. Policy principles**

- a. Access to safe drinking water shall be recognised as a basic human right.
- b. Beneficiaries shall have commensurate responsibilities and will be held accountable for sustainable use.
- c. The policy envisions a water conscious society which will ensure sustainable management of water.
- d. Safety of drinking water supplied to the people will be ensured.
- e. Drinking water needs shall have the highest priority over other competing demands for water.
- f. Planning and development of water supply services will adopt people-centred, participatory and demand responsive approaches and shall be gender and youth responsive. Planning shall include development of type designs, policy for connections, and the procedure for monitoring and evaluation.
- g. In the design and implementation of water safety plans, features and considerations will be included for climate adaptation and mitigation, plans for risk resilience, and process for grievance redress.
- h. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the choice of having recourse to drinking water from a reticulated piped water supply system or to remain with safely managed protected well, spring water supply or rainwater harvesting system etc shall be the option of the people.

- i. In planning, responding to needs and available funds and affordability, due consideration shall be given to the selection of the type of safely managed water supply.  
(Reticulated piped supply, protected dug wells, spring water supply and rainwater harvested supply).
- j. Drinking water needs of all, including those in underserved, urban, remote rural areas and those of migratory populations, will have due consideration.
- k. Investments for drinking water supply development will be based on agreed and established priorities and principles including ensuring the financial viability of the systems developed and the financial sustainability of the agency responsible.
- l. The State as the custodian of all water resources will manage such resources on behalf of the people in an effective and efficient manner, with due recognition to its prime value, and consistent with the social, economic and environmental needs of the present and future generations.
- m. Abstraction of water from all sources (surface and groundwater) will be made in an environmentally sustainable manner, without affecting users and in particular abstraction from rivers and streams, will be carried out with due recognition and without prejudice to downstream users, “Everyone lives downstream”.
- n. Rainwater harvesting including artificial recharge where relevant, will be given greater importance and recognition by the State.
- o. Climate resilience and disaster risk mitigation will be embedded in any consideration of water resources management and the incorporation of necessary mitigation and adaptation measures will become standard procedure.
- p. Aspirations as stipulated in the relevant United Nations declared Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-Goal 6.1, will be upheld.

## **5. Policy Statements**

- a. A comprehensive national master plan for drinking water shall be prepared to embody and ensure the vision and policy prerequisites for achieving universal access to safe and quality drinking water.
- b. Identification and mapping of all communities without adequate access to drinking water at present, will be carried out with due speed, targeting those in underserved urban, remote rural situations, the estate sector and migrant populations.
- c. Utilize resources based on social, economic and environmental considerations to ensure equitable distribution of investments to minimize water stress across communities.
- d. The operational responsibilities of water service provided shall be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level with due consideration to management capacity.
- e. The safety of water resources, their conservation and the prevention of pollution, the sustainability of both ground water and surface water resources will be ensured through the adoption of instruments such as the National Water Safety Policy and the intervention of the competent government authorities, in time and form.

- f. Rainwater harvesting including artificial recharge where relevant, shall be given greater importance and recognition by the State, taking specific responsibility, for all aspects of enhancing the management of this valuable resource.
- g. Misuse of drinking water supplied shall be controlled. Emphasize and encourage the reuse of water for secondary purposes, wherever possible.
- h. Vending and storage of drinking water in all its forms shall require the approval of the competent government authorities, to conform to acceptable safety and quality standards and practice, in the context of public health protection.
- i. An institutional arrangement for the effective management of care and maintenance of water supply services in schools, social care institutions (children and elderly homes) shall be instituted by the government.
- j. Proper care and maintenance of water supply services in public institutions shall be given focused attention as a priority.
- k. Regulation and arrangements for independent surveillance of the quality required of drinking water distributed by all, will be in place. The Ministry of Health shall have in place, the arrangements needed for specific responsibility for activation and management of the Water Quality Surveillance Committee System (WQSCS).
- l. Vulnerable groups resulting from affordability in meeting water tariffs, may have due consideration provided under social safety networks with subsidies targeted to them.
- m. Mechanisms needed for efficient and effective coordination and collaboration amongst agencies responsible for the provision of drinking water, shall be agreed and established with due speed, at all levels.
- n. The responsible Ministry to ensure potable water supply to all, will conduct well prepared coordination meetings of the relevant stakeholders, on a regular basis to ensure collaboration and action as needed.

## **6. Policy Goals**

- a. The goal is to provide universal access to safely managed drinking water as a human right and in keeping with the UN SDG (Target 6.1), and to meet other needs of potable water.
- b. To ameliorate the disparity in drinking water services to the underserved urban, remote rural and migrant populations.
- c. Pursuant on the above, an appropriate and enabling policy framework shall be established to mobilise and empower the relevant institutions.

## **7. Applicability & Scope**

The policy applies to:

- a. The recipients of potable water, meeting their obligations, responsibilities and commitments.
- b. those responsible for the security of water resources and allocation of water for competing demands, based on agreed and established priorities.
- c. those responsible for monitoring and management of the Water Safety Policy
- d. all government and private organisations working to meet required standards in the planning, development, operation and maintenance of potable water supply systems, urban and rural.
- e. those monitoring the quality of water supplied by all

- f. those presently not benefitting from a supply of drinking water particularly in the underserved urban, rural, and remote situations.

The scope will cover:

- g. identification of those needing, at the least, a stable supply of drinking water in the island and particularly those in the rural and remote situations and the marginalised communities
- h. Research, planning and development, securing financial support for all aspects of development water supply services.
- i. monitoring the impacts of climate change on water sources and supply systems and incorporating mitigation and adaptive measures to ensure sufficient future supply of safely managed water supply.
- j. establishment of institutional arrangements with associated responsibilities established for the care and maintenance of water supply systems.
- k. the improvement of existing systems and services where required.
- l. Arrangements for disaster and risk management.
- m. accounting for all water supply systems in operation in the country, either State or privately operated.
- n. Monitoring and reporting of quality required of drinking water supplied by all water supply systems in operation.
- o. Reporting on statistics required by the Government and the relevant United Nations Organisations in keeping with the commitments made by the country under the UN declared SDGs.
- p. Where relevant, the Public, Private Partnership (PPP) model will have due consideration for water supply service industry, to improve the coverage and operational efficiency.

## **8. Policy Implementation**

### **I. Strategies**

At the outset, the Ministry responsible for policy and actions related to the supply of drinking water shall obtain government approval for instituting the National Policy for Drinking Water. The Policy goals, the supporting principles, and the purpose and rationale behind the Policy, shall be provided focussed attention.

On an assessment of the gaps and needs (institutional and other) to meet the objectives of the Policy, the Ministry shall set up the institutional mechanisms needed and shall mobilise the financial resources and human resources needed on a planned basis, to give effect to actions needed.

Mechanisms will be formulated through wide discussion, to ensure effective communication, coordination and collaboration amongst the host of agencies associated, both government and others, participating at different levels and for different needs. They need to be adequate to maximize synergies required for the progressive development and maintenance of drinking water supply services to all, and in accordance with sound public utility practice.

The government shall thus provide the enabling environment and authority for action to commence progress in meeting the Policy principles and goals. The government shall mobilise the needed resources and lead. Compliance with the Policy shall be closely monitored, by the Ministry.

## **II. Responsibility and authority**

The primary responsibility for the provision of utility services including provision of potable water rests with the Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry depends on Provincial Councils, Municipal Councils and Urban Councils within its purview, to attend to needs. The Councils are governed under their respective legislative enactments.

(Reference “subject to the powers reserved to or vested in any other authority by this Ordinance or by any other written law, within the administrative limits of the town, (the Councils are), charged with the regulation, control and administration of all matters relating to the public health, public utility services and public thoroughfares, and generally with the protection and promotion of the comfort, convenience and welfare of the people and the amenities of the town”.)

The Ministry of Local Government has in many situations, transferred the responsibility to the central Ministry responsible for matters of policy and coordination related to development of drinking water supply and sanitation services, (Refer Gazette Extraordinary No. 1681/3 of 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010).

### **(i) Local Government Authorities**

They are responsible for providing utility services including drinking water supplies and sanitation services to their constituents. They shall be guided by the principles and imperatives under the National Policy On Drinking Water and shall operate and maintain water supply services in accordance with sound administrative financial, technical and public utility practices.

In certain circumstances, they may commission the NWSDB or the DNCWS for the technical assistance, in meeting that need.

### **(ii) Provincial Councils**

Under the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, they have the authority to monitor the activities of the Local Authorities, including work related to the development and supply of potable water.

### **(iii) The Ministry Responsible for Drinking Water and Sanitation**

The Ministry responsible for drinking water and sanitation policy and coordination has the pivotal role for the development and management of the associated services in the country. It attends to its responsibilities related to provision of drinking water through the NWSDB, the DNCWS and the Water Resources Board, under its purview.

The responsibilities cover:

- a) promotion of access to drinking water to all, as a human need and right

- b) formulation of policies and legislation to guide development partners and operating agencies at national, provincial and district level to ensure that standards are met in terms of potable water supplied to the public.
- c) coordination of activities among all stakeholders and provision of a platform for institutional collaboration, maximizing synergies associated.
- d) coordinating activities between the NWSDB and the DNCWS
- e) compliance with guidelines on efficient and effective use of resources, adopting principles of equity, transparency, and accountability working together with the Department of National Planning
- f) mobilizing all resources needed (Human resources and financial)
- g) monitoring performance on defined objectives in the National Policy for Drinking Water, adopting appropriate indicators.
- h) Support to the Ministry of Health in implementing the National Water Safety Policy and in monitoring the quality of potable water supplied by all, working together on the WQSC.
- i) Administering action towards achievement of United Nations established SDG 6 (Targets 6.1 to 6.6) through partnerships with major water sector agencies.
- j) Provision of data and information to facilitate national and global monitoring & reporting of sector performance adopting internationally accepted key performance indicators.
- k) Maintaining a database on access to drinking water supplies and water quality to ensure the requirements under the United Nations declared SDG are met while complying with the Government development agenda.

**(iv) The National Water Supply & Drainage Board (NWSDB)**

The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) was established in 1975 (NWSDB Law No2 of 1974) under the purview of the Ministry responsible for matters related potable water supply and sanitation facilities. It was endowed with the necessary technical expertise and management knowledge and strength.

NWSDB is the principal arm of the Ministry for development, operation and maintenance of potable water supplies and sanitation facilities.

The responsibilities of NWSDB under the National Policy for Drinking Water shall cover:

- (a) Development of potable water supply as needed, in accordance with priorities established by the government and approved for action.
- (b) Planning and development of drinking water supply systems for identified rural communities, as may be requested and needed by the Ministry responsible and for management of operations through CBOs.
- (c) Maintaining and upgrading existing services where needed,
- (d) Taking over of selected urban and semi-urban water supply systems on the direction of the Ministries concerned, to facilitate improved water supply facilities to the public.
- (e) Coordination and collaboration with the DNCWS
- (f) Maintaining sustainability of its operations and where appropriate through cross subsidies from the financially stronger regional support centers and providing cross subsidies targeted to low income and vulnerable communities where needed.
- (g) Responding to situations of disasters caused by droughts, floods and health related epidemics.

- (h) On request, providing technical assistance to water supply providers, to enhance service quality and build their capacity to ensure long term sustainability.
- (i) Provision of technical assistance to other stakeholders especially in the rural water sector.

**(v) Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS)**

The Department of National Community Water Supply (DNCWS) was established in 2014 for providing particular focus and assistance to the rural sector in collaboration with NWSDB and to find solutions to outstanding issues affecting the rural water supply sector. It is under the same Ministry as the NWSDB but does not carry the same level of technical expertise as the NWSDB. It carries good knowledge of the rural sector and their issues.

Its mandate is to ensure the sustainable delivery of rural water supply services which are presently operated by many community entities.

Under the National Policy for Drinking Water, the DNCWS shall identify communities in rural and remote areas needing drinking water supply services. It may depend on the NWSDB, (the agency with the technical expertise), as its consultant, to plan, design and construct a water supply system. It may arrange and prepare a CBO to take over the system to manage the operations.

Demarcation of relative responsibilities as above between the DNCWS and NWSDB under the National Policy on Drinking Water will help strengthen coordination and collaboration between the two agencies, for the benefit of both and for the Rural Water Supply sector.

**(vi) Community Based Organizations (CBOs)**

Planning and development of drinking water supply systems for identified rural communities, as may be requested by the Ministry, and for management of operations through CBOs.

**(vii) PHDT**

Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) is a tripartite Organization and was set up and incorporated on September 18, 1992 to facilitate improvement of the wellbeing of the Plantation Community through social welfare programmes.

Three parties involved are the Government of Sri Lanka, Regional Plantation Companies and some of the major Trade Unions in the plantation sector. The Government is represented by the Ministries of Plantations, Finance, Health and Ministry of Water Supply and Estate Infrastructure Development. The PHDT is the main service provider to the plantation worker community and serves the plantation community investing in sustainable programmes and projects.

**(viii) The Private Sector**

For further development of potable water supply systems to meet the growth of demand and for assisting with meeting the target for universal coverage under United Nations declared SDG, financial resources have been sought through direct investments by the private sector and from outside traditional sources such as the Development Banks. Funding through Public Private Partnerships (PPP) such as Build, Operate and Transfer (B.O.T) arrangements provide funding sans debt implications and shall have further consideration.

**(ix) National Water Resources Council (NWRC)**

A National Water Resources Council has been proposed to be established, pursuant on the Water Resources Policy, to perform the national level regulatory mechanism in strategic decision making related to water resources management. The NWRC will be under the purview of the Prime Minister's office. The Council is expected to carry out periodic reviews of water resources management strategies based on national and international best practices, to ensure sustainability of water resources. NWRC will promote participatory decision making to ensure flexible water allocation criteria and allocation of water for competing demands.

The National Policy on Drinking Water seeks the highest priority for drinking water particularly during periods of water scarcity and emergencies.

The National Water Resources Council when established is expected to play an important role in utilization of ground water by monitoring, managing and controlling over abstraction and conservation of aquifers. It will promote rainwater harvesting including artificial recharge of ground water.

**(x) National Water Resources Secretariat**

The National Water Resources Secretariat (NWRS) will be established with adequate legal and administrative powers and regulatory directives to carry out its due functions identified in the water sector. The NWRS will carry out its functions under the direct guidance of the NWRS, with optimum coordination with national and provincial level water sector institutions and water user community.

**(xi) The Water Resources Board**

The Water Resources Board (WRB) was established under an Act of Parliament in 1964. It is engaged on ground water resources management. In particular, all groundwater abstraction activities require the clearance of the Water Resources Board. Presently under the Ministry of Water Supply and may be transferred under the National Water Resources Council when established.

**(xii) Ministry of Health**

The Ministry of Health shall be the regulator for the independent surveillance of the safety and quality of drinking water supplied by all such services, to conform to standards approved for human health.

A joint cabinet paper was approved in September 2009 to strengthen the oversight requirements and powers of the Ministry of Health in quality assurance actions. The Ministry of Health as the Chair of the WQSC will act as the independent surveillance agency for the continuous and vigilant public health assessment and review of drinking water supply, to ensure acceptability, to avoid health hazards.

**(xiii) The Central Environment Authority**

The Authority will promote and be actively involved in activities related to the management of conservation of water sources and water sheds, to ensure sustainable availability of water for

communities. Close collaboration with the Ministries associated with water supply services and health will be an essential need.

**(xiv) Development Partners**

Several multi-lateral development banks, bilateral aid agencies, export banks, agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector have played a supportive role in development of safe and quality drinking water in Sri Lanka.

In addition to providing funds for development of water supply systems, the development partners assist with advice on policy and institutional aspects and in capacity development to ensure the viability and sustainability of the sector.

**(xv) The beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries shall have responsibility and commitment to assist with ensuring uninterrupted services. The beneficiaries need to be aware of the cost of water, limitation of water resources and the importance of conservation and preservation and of environmental protection.

They shall:

- Participate actively during the planning, design, and construction stages of a project to ensure a demand responsive system.
- Collaborate with the service provider to meet their responsibilities in ensuring the reliability and quality of service.
- Be vigilant to prevent abuse of a valuable service by irresponsible persons.
- Actively participate and collaborate with the service providers on awareness raising campaigns.
- Actively participate in ensuring water safety and implementing the National Water Safety Policy.
- Participate in advocacy for ensuring water security
- Actively participate and contribute toward preservation, protection, and conservation of water resources.
- In certain circumstances, form community-based organizations CBOs to plan, implement and manage their community water supply systems.
- Conserve and preserve treated water supplied and contribute towards cost recovery to ensure long term sustainability of the systems.

## **Glossary**

### **Annex: List of related policies**

01. National Water Resources Policy (2023)
02. Water Resources Board Act
03. National Environmental Act
04. National Rainwater Policy and Strategies (2005)
05. National Water Safety Policy