

# **RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROGRAMME**

## **A Policy Brief**

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### **Summary**

As of June 2016, access to safe water in Uganda's rural areas stood at 67 percent (up from 65 percent in June 2015). Over the same period, access to rural sanitation rose to 79 percent representing a 2 percent increase from the last year. Functionality for rural water supplies on the contrary registered a 2 percent decline standing at 86 percent compared to 88 percent in June 2015.

While significant progress has been registered over the years in line with the golden indicators, the trend suggests that resource allocation to rural water and sanitation projects is not achieving the desired results in terms of efficiency of delivery (cost savings) and functionality of water facilities. Key among the challenges faced are inadequate and inequitable coverage of facilities, low functionality of installed facilities, poor operation and maintenance (O&M) of facilities, and persistent poor quality of water. These challenges largely result of inadequate financial resources at the district level to conduct major repairs and lengthy procurement processes. A shift in policy is necessary of the performance of the sector is to meet the country targets for 2019/2020. Key among the policy propositions is a review of the budget allocation mechanisms to ensure adequate resources for hard to serve districts, new water sources, rehabilitation of water sources and requisite software.

### **The state of rural water supply and sanitation in Uganda**

According to the National Population and Housing Census 2014, it is estimated that 26.7 million people (78%) reside in rural areas. The Rural Water and Sanitation Programme is providing support to the decentralized implementation of rural water supply and sanitation facilities by Districts through Sector Budget Support and implementation of specific water projects. The programme also supports the promotion and implementation of sanitation and hygiene development. Through the RWSSP, GoU implements activities related to the provision of software, infrastructure construction and installation, baseline surveys, social mobilization, community-based planning and monitoring, hygiene and sanitation education, Community Lead Total Sanitation (CLTS), gender awareness and capacity building at user level, for effective use and sustainable operation.

The overall objective of Government of Uganda is to achieve the sustainable provision of safe water and hygienic sanitation, based on management responsibility and ownership by users.

### **The Rural Water and Sanitation Programme (RWSSP)**

**Rural Water Supply:** The programme develops public water supply facilities; trains, monitors, mentors and sometimes funds communities to maintain the facilities. The current technology options used for water supply improvements in rural areas include protected springs (18%), shallow wells (23%), deep boreholes (44%), piped water schemes (gravity-fed) and piped water schemes (pumped) (11%), valley tanks and rainwater tanks.

**Sanitation and Hygiene:** The programme mainly promotes and monitors development and usage of private (Household owned) sanitation facilities. Occasional public facilities include public toilets and faecal transport and treatment facilities. Faecal sludge management in Uganda is still poorly developed. Less than 10% of the toilet facilities in rural settings can be

emptied, making the demand for faecal sludge removal low. There are no sludge disposal/treatment facilities available to rural communities except those near towns.

**Challenges:**

The challenges that were seen in the sector were as follows:

1. Funding to and within the programme:

- Funding to the programme in recent years has been maintained at 60 bn annually. During the same period the number of districts has been increasing which has increased recurrent expenditures, and thus reduction in the funds available for the facilities.
- In the area of sanitation there is no longer a budgetary allocation in sister MDA budgets (MOH, MOES) to fund sanitation activities. If sanitation has to be improved this shortfall needs to be addressed.
- Within the programme there has been an emphasis on construction of new facilities rather than maintaining existing facilities or even rehabilitating failed facilities. In reality the number of facilities coming into service barely replace those going out of service, with minimal effect on coverage.
- With the low-hanging fruits exhausted, the per capita cost for new facilities is now on the rise. Furthermore the need to use more expensive technologies to address developing realities i.e. districts that are not progressing due to water stress, community demands that now want a higher level of service etc.
- In addition SDG attainment, which requires a 100% coverage will require a closer review of funding both to and within the programme.

2. Poor implementation

- Selection of interventions is often a political process, whereby allocation of funds is mostly to the more influential sections of society. So too does the detail implementation process (selection of contractors, allocation of support services or staff etc). This leads to inefficiencies in the allocation of funds/interventions.
- Although there is abundant data generated both within districts and MWE, there was not sufficient evidence that this is used for decision making.
- Successful completion of contracts was sometimes impeded by poor supervision, especially as beneficiaries, some LLGs and other stakeholders are excluded in the formulation, acquisition and management of contracts.

3. Sanitation improvement strategy

Sanitation improvement target of the program is based on awareness creation and promotion etc. This assumes that the community were not aware of the need for sanitation. Virtually all households sampled knew of the need for sanitation facilities and use. Therefore there appeared to be a gap in enforcement that the program also needed to incorporate, to increase sanitation coverage.

4. Poor sustainability of existing water supply facilities

- Poor maintenance habits: Communities are tasked with maintaining water facilities. However the maintenance culture does not permeate to the village where facilities are often allowed to break down first before they are maintained.
- Inconsistent funding to maintenance: Communities could use own funds and/or programme funds for maintenance. Consistent availability of user generated funds were often a problem due to management inefficiencies within community management organizations. Allocation of program funds to maintenance is not done

efficiently, which would have required proper evaluation of maintenance requirements facility by facility. And allocating funds accordingly.

- Effectiveness of support to communities: Post construction support is implemented through Community health assistants. These were seen to provide software support to user committees. There was no hardware support i.e. regular inspection and assessment of facilities. Hence the frequent breakdowns and ineffectual maintenance schedules. There seems to be a need to review the whole maintenance strategy.

### The Evidence

Evidence from implementation of the RWSSP suggests progress in regard to the golden indicators over the period 2010/11 to 2016/17.

Golden Indicators			Target	Achievements		
			FY 10/11	FY 10/11	FY 14/15	16/17
Access % of people within 1 km (rural) and 0.2 km (urban) of an improved water source	Rural	65%	65%	65%	67%	
Functionality % of improved water sources that are functional at time of spot-check (rural/WfP). Ratio of the actual hours of water supply to the required hours (small towns)	Rural	83%	83%	88%	86%	
Per Capita Investment Cost Average cost per beneficiary of new water and sanitation schemes (US\$)	Rural	\$42	\$47	\$41	\$32	
Sanitation % of people with access to improved sanitation (Households).	Rural	72%	70%	77%	79%	
Sanitation: Pupil to latrine/toilet stance ratio – schools (from DHI reporting)		50:1	66:1	67:1	70:1	
Water Quality % of water samples taken at the point of water collection, waste discharge point that comply with national standards.	Protected Source - Rural	E. coli (from WQD)	95%	93%	36%	41%
Quantity of Water Cumulative water for production storage capacity (million m3)		22	26.5	31.7	37.2	
Equity Mean Sub-County deviation from the National average in persons per improved water point		155	214	162	142	
Hand washing % of people with access to (and using) hand-washing facilities.	Household (rural)	23%	24%	33%	36%	
	School	35%	33%	38%	34%	
Management % of water points with actively functioning Water & Sanitation Committees (rural/WfP)/Boards (urban).	Rural	73%	71%	77%	87%	
Gender % of Water User committees/Water Boards with women holding key positions.	Rural	75%	81%	84%	86%	
Water Resources Management Compliance % of water abstraction and discharge permits holders complying with permit conditions (note that data currently refers to permit validity only).	Wastewater discharge	49%	46%	52%	56%	
	Surface water abstraction	70%	73%	71%	74%	
	Groundwater abstraction	70%	67%	71%	74%	
	Drilling			88%	90%	

### Strategies and Policy Recommendations

Prepare new strategic plan to address the changed situation that is to be addressed by the programme including:

- Changed demands/situation of users
- A changed national focus to SDGs and Vision 2040.

Review budgetary allocation to cater for hard to reach/disadvantaged districts with a priority going to areas where access is already too low. Review the allocation of funds between new sources, rehabilitation and software with more money being allocated to rehabilitation of boreholes

Enact guidelines for enforcement of sanitation for higher compliance. The CBMS approach should be more proactive in the management of water facilities.

Review of roles institutions, namely:

- Contribution of deconcentrated entities vis-a-vis traditional offices to WSS activities e.g. provide TSUs with supervisory roles instead of advisory roles
- WUCs, CBOs, HPMAs integration to WSS activities
- Contribution of MOH; MOES; MOLG & others in **sanitation**

Review the District implementation manual to take into account Practical improvements on the following:

**i. Financial Sustainability**

**Water**

- a) Ensure collection of user fee is friendly.
- b) Ensure user fee is fair and affordable.
- c) Ensure financial management is responsive and accountable.
- d) Ensure financial allocation to LGs match the rehabilitation needs.
- e) Maintain donors and other partner's contribution interest to the sector.

**Sanitation**

- a) Create financial incentives available to households.
- b) Ensure financial allocation to specific LGs match their specific sanitation needs.

**ii. Social Sustainability**

- a) Ensure continuous engagement and mobilization between the LGs, lower LGs and the users.

**iii. Governance Sustainability**

- a) Improve sense and level of ownership and voluntarism among the community.
- b) Improve appreciation of the consumers right to water

**iv. Institutional Sustainability**

- a) Make WUCs properly fully setup and functional
- b) Make HMPAs properly fully setup and functional.
- c) Make CBOs properly accountable.
- d) Ensure positive contributions from all stakeholders (DWD, DWO, TSU, S/C, WUC, CBO, CSO, Donors, Development partners and community).
- e) Ensure integrated planning and harmonization among the different stakeholders.
- f) Delineate and streamline the roles of DWD, TSU, LGs and lower LGs