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# WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION POLICY (WSASP)

Summary and recommendations for Civil Society by EPDN





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## General Responsibility

The policy outlines a general responsibility whereby the sector "will be expected to contribute towards social development and to provide the necessary environmentally sound infrastructure for economic development."

## Goals

The Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (*WSASP*) does not provide for a specific policy goal. The policy instead outlines four important, long-term components that can be described as overarching goals. These are:

### Goal 1

Availing essential water and sanitation services to all Namibians at an affordable cost.

### Goal 2

The provision of water and sanitation services should be achieved through combining government and community efforts. This approach will require community engagement and participation, shared responsibility between both parties and the outsourcing of services "where necessary and appropriate."

### Goal 3

Communities should have the right to choose the type of water and sanitation services they want, with respect towards national regulations. Beneficiaries should contribute to the cost of services that go beyond meeting basic needs.

### Goal 4

Development and the provision of water and sanitation services should be environmentally sustainable and make effective use of Namibia's water resources. This goal should be supported by ongoing public information and education campaigns.

## Leading Offices / Ministries / Agencies (O/M/As)

This policy does not specifically allocate responsibility for its implementation to one or more *O/M/As*. Instead, it acknowledges that the acceptance of the policy "by all stakeholders represents only a foundation from which to work." Hence, the policy's adoption is just the first step to its successful implementation.

The effective application and use of *WSASP* will depend on proper and close cooperation between key stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector.

The policy does outline various sub-sectors in the water and sanitation sector and assigns these respectively to various *O/M/As*. For example, the supply of water services to communal rural communities is the task of Regional Councils.

It is also notable that *WSASP* makes specific recommendations with regards to re-allocating responsibilities between government ministries and enactment of certain planned regulations.

The most important ministry in the sector is the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Resettlement (*MAWLR*) which according to the policy: "will remain responsible for the overall management and regulation of the water cycle and water resources in the country with the prime objective of ensuring that they will be properly investigated and used on a sustainable basis to cater for the needs of people and to sustain their environment." Other government institutions mentioned in the policy include the Ministry of Health and Social Services (*MHSS*), the country's bulk water supplier NamWater, Regional Councils (*RC*) and Local Authorities (*LA*).





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## What does the policy say about responsible bodies?

It is important to underline that the WSASP recommends the allocation of responsibilities to respective O/M/As and stakeholders. Their mandates and tasks are thus not cast in stone. The policy notes that responsibilities can be adjusted as and when government services are restructured. Furthermore, the allocated responsibilities are guided by a set of basic policy principles concerning the “establishment, operation, maintenance and replacement” of water and sanitation service infrastructure. The policy principles include significant points, such as delegating responsibilities to the lowest suitable governance level and income received from water supply and sanitation services should be used to pay suppliers and to maintain and expand the services.

Given the complexity and large size of the water and sanitation sector, the policy advises stakeholders to prioritise decentralisation and strong coordination between stakeholders.

The WSASP calls for the establishment of a “broad multi-sectoral forum for sector coordination on the operational level.” Among others this forum should address “sector policy issues,” resolve planning and coordination issues, determine priorities and co-ordinate the allocation of government funds to identified priority projects. The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land reform (MAWLR) is responsible for establishing and administrating this coordination forum.

*In terms of stakeholder responsibilities, the WSASP recommends mainly the following:*

1. The MAWLR is overall responsible for the managing, regulating and coordinating the water and sanitation sector. Much of these tasks are given to the

*Directorate of Water Supply and Sanitation Co-ordination within the ministry. The MAWLR is also responsible for providing water and sanitation services for government resettlement farms and irrigation extension services.*

2. Then provision of water and sanitation services in urban areas is the responsibility of the respective LAs and RCs.
3. The MHSS responsibility in the water sector includes undertaking of national health education campaigns and implementing and monitoring national sanitation standards to guard against disease outbreaks such as cholera linked to poor hygiene.
4. “Farmers and other communities on private land” are responsible for securing their own water and sanitation services – with information support, monitoring, inspection and control functions provided by MAWLR.
5. The water supply and sanitation infrastructure at government facilities such as rural schools, border posts and clinics are the responsibility of the respective line ministry – including making budget available for this infrastructure. The Ministry of Works and Transport (MWT) can be contracted by the relevant ministry to “oversee implementation” of the infrastructure.





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## What main measurable and positive outcome should be produced by the policy?

Namibia's water and sanitation sector has gone through considerable changes since *WSASP* was introduced in 2008. Hence it is understandable that some of the policy's stipulations are outdated, while other more recent challenges in the sector, such as climate change, are not properly addressed. Furthermore, the policy does not provide measurable targets nor an implementation plan. Instead, the *WSASP* states that *O/M/As* are responsible for developing costed strategies for their respective mandates within the water and sanitation sector. The policy's objectives and "principles of integrated water resources planning and development" should guide these strategies.

Indeed, government has developed a National Sanitation Strategy 2010 – 2015 (*NSS*). This strategy takes into account the *WSASP* principles and objectives. It further provides a detailed scorecard with objectives, targets and initiatives/activities.

## Policy Objectives & Benefits

Guided by the four components or policy goals, *WSASP* sets out a number of objectives split up between water supply and sanitation.

### Improve water supply to:

- Contribute to improved public health;

- Reduce the burden of collecting water;
- Promote community based social development taking the role of women into special account;
- Support basic water needs;
- Stimulate economic development; and
- Promote water conservation.

### Improve the provision of sanitation services to:

- Contribute towards improved health and quality of life;
- Ensure a hygienic environment;
- Protect water sources from pollution;
- Promote conservation of water; and
- Stimulate economic development.

It is significant that the *WSASP* highlights a number of general principles that should be applied within the water and sanitation sector and can count as benefits for citizens and the environment. Crucially, the policy calls for a balanced approach between limiting debts and securing cost-recovery for water and sanitation services "without sacrificing equitable access to the poor and marginalised."

The policy further encourages the establishment of subsidies for domestic consumers who are unable to afford water and sanitation services. However, these subsidy mechanisms should be transparent – beneficiaries should "know the amount of the subsidy, why the consumer is subsidized and by whom." Commercial, industrial and mining operations should pay the full cost recovery tariff – acknowledging the scarcity of water in Namibia and the future costs of expanding water and sanitation services.



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## What does the policy say about public participation in its drafting and its revision?

Stakeholder participation is a crucial part of the *WSASP*. Indeed, individual and community participation in the water and sanitation sector is explicitly encouraged by the policy to improve living conditions and contribute to the development of the country. Community involvement should for example be sought by *RCs*' when planning settlement expansions. Particularly in communal rural areas, the policy encourages communities to take ownership of water and sanitation facilities and manage these themselves with support of government.

Development of *WSASP* was based on a comprehensive review of the previous policy from 1993. Little is known of the process but it is likely that it included broad stakeholder consultations.

## Associated costs/ budget assigned to the policy?

*WSASP* does not provide a budget or a list of strategies with cost estimates. The *NSS* does provide a budget costed at an estimated N\$ 1.64 billion over the five-year implementation period.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the policy's vision?

The policy has no vision, but presents general responsibilities instead

### What is the policy's mission

The policy document does not stipulate a mission statement.

### What does the policy say about its enforcement?

The *WSASP* provides little guidance on enforcement of the policy. However, the policy does provide detailed principles for water and sanitation service tariffs. With regards to enforcing payment of these services the policy cautions that rural communities and *LA*'s should not be cut off from bulk water and services outright, but instead use alternative methods of cost recovery and credit control. In addition, *WSASP* states that *MHSS* is responsible for enforcing health regulations to promote good sanitation practices.

### What does the policy foresee about its evaluation?

The *WSASP* does not provide any information on monitoring and evaluating policy implementation.

### What does the policy need to succeed?

The policy states that the overall expansion of the water and sanitation sector, and its ability to meet citizens needs for clean water and proper sanitation services, will require enough finances, development of people and skills, community participation and political will to implement sector strategies. *WSASP* notes that these requirements have to be jointly pursued by all stakeholders to achieve the policy's objectives.





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## The policy and civil society - the policy's impact on the day-to-day work of CSOs

Given the fact that the WSASP is currently outdated – it has only limited impact on CSOs day-to-day work. The policy's objectives and principals for example around equitable water and sanitation services are useful when it comes to advocating for specific projects. The WSASP is currently under review but it is not clear if a new policy draft is available and when it will be introduced.

## Recommendations: How can CSOs make best use of the policy?

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land reform (MAWLR) has established water and sanitation forums and working groups in an effort to improve coordination and cooperation in the sector.

CSOs, such as Development Workshop Namibia, The Red Cross and Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN) partake in these coordination mechanisms. The coordination mechanisms are open and it is fairly easy for CSOs to join, reflecting a priority of the WSASP. However, particularly forums at national level require considerable technical expertise from stakeholders. Hence, smaller CSOs might be best advised to participated and support water and sanitation initiatives at regional and local authority level. This engagement is clearly justified and encouraged by WSASP – with its emphasis on community participation and ownership.

The current policy is useful in promoting the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach by CSOs. CLTS initiatives in Swakopmund, Otjiwarongo and Oshakati have shown promising results in improving sanitation services for local communities.



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<https://mawf.gov.na/directorate-of-water-supply-and-sanitation-coordination>

You can find the link to the policy here:  
<https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/nam176574.pdf>

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