

## TOWARDS A WATER SECURE KENYA

*The UN Millennium Declaration set as one of its targets to halve the proportion of people living without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. Access to safe water for all is an essential component of poverty reduction. Though pessimists may find this an unreachable objective, Kenya's government has taken on the challenge. GWP's challenge was how to add value to the government's ongoing programme.*

Inspired by Kenya's 1999 *National Water Policy* that had already laid the institutional foundation for meeting the water needs of the country, a four day National Conference on Integrated Water Resources Management was held in Nairobi in March 2002, opened by the former President of Kenya, President Daniel Arap Moi. The event doubled up as the launch of the National Water Campaign. The meeting conveyed to Kenyans the message that Kenya was facing a water crisis which threatened its very existence and whose reversal would require the participation and support of everybody and every sector that uses water.

Eighteen Cabinet Ministers took part in the event, thirteen of whom presented Ministerial papers on water from different sector perspectives such as energy, agriculture, lands and settlement, transport and communications, rural development and agriculture, trade and industry, environment, local government, health, planning, finance and the Attorney General. Nearly all the local authorities, regional development authorities, research institutions and universities, professional bodies, the private sector, and NGOs were present.

The participation by those at the highest level of government, together with the commitments made at the conference, signified a strong political mandate for the ongoing water sector reforms.

### *The New Water Act*

Building on this initiative, the coalition of political parties (NARC) elected in December 2002, set out on an agenda of reform with water resources development and management as one of its priorities. In his opening address to parliament, President Mwai Kibaki stated that his Government, "... is committed to ensuring that Kenyans have access to clean water." In this context, the Minister for Water Affairs established the new *2002 Water Act*, intended to tackle the worsening water services experienced over the earlier decade. This step has given poverty reduction in Kenya a new possibility.

This *Water Act* established an autonomous Water Resources Management Authority, destined to manage and protect Kenya's resources. It also shaped an institutional framework that gave responsibility for providing decentralised services to seven regional Water Services Boards (WSB). These Boards manage water services assets and ensure that they remain in the public realm.

An essential aspect of the reform outlined in the *Water Act* is the separation of water and sanitation from the management of resources. Overall supervision of water services will consequently, be carried out by the Water Services Regulatory Board (WSRB), an organ in charge of regulating the services supplied by the regional Boards and their providers. From mid 2005, the responsibility for water services provision – originally falling under the Ministry of Water and Irrigation – will go entirely to the WSRB. Simultaneously, representatives for the new Area Catchments Advisory Committees are being selected and the Water Users Associations are being encouraged to define their new roles.

The political determination for structural change of water management in Kenya is therefore, both strong and solid. In effect, the target of developing national Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Efficiency strategies and plans – set off at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg – consolidates this effort. And it links directly to the six priority issues in Kenya’s efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals – food security, unemployment, gender, water, sanitation and infrastructure development.

#### *Kenya and the GWP*

GWP has been known in the Water Ministry in Kenya since 1996 when officials from the Kenya government participated in the Water Symposium held in Stockholm, Sweden – a time when GWP was launched at its inaugural Consulting Partners (CP) meeting. On their return from Sweden, they provided an overview of what GWP was going to do and how it might prove to be a useful partner to Kenya in the future.

In November 2003 that vision became a reality when the Kenya Water Partnership came into existence. During its launch, the Permanent Secretary in the Water Ministry challenged the Partnership to make contributions that add value to the water reform process being undertaken by the Ministry. With this challenge in mind a work programme was developed, specifically tailoring activities towards the Kenya government’s efforts to develop the national IWRM and Water Efficiency Plans.

#### *Adding value*

The single biggest constraint initially facing the Partnership was how to fit its activities into a process that was already ongoing – balancing the many different interests and dynamics between the Ministries, donors and GWP itself – and provide added value to that process.

A key difficulty for each player was to identify and accept their different roles. There was a presumption that GWP was an implementer, not just a facilitator – the Partnership was perceived as a competitor! GWP’s presence further raised questions concerning the ownership of the processes and the plan itself.

Good communication and networking helped resolve the problem – taking time to talk to the right people, ensuring that the added value of having GWP on board was seen as complementary rather than competitive, and clarifying its function as a facilitator.

GWP’s role of providing a “neutral platform for dialogue” in the process proved to be decisive. Subsequently, through the Secretariat for Water Sector Reforms in the Ministry for Water, the Partnership has created a forum where all stakeholders, including government, could get together, share ideas and exchange information. The forum has now formally brought together over one hundred stakeholders from the concerned Ministries and Departments, regional development authorities, national institutions, universities, NGOs, the private sector, the media, and communities and self help groups from across the country.

Working Groups have been formed to examine aspects of Kenya’s water resource development and management arrangements and make recommendations for inclusion in the draft versions of the IWRM and Water Efficiency plans. They took as their guide, the classification defined in GWP’s IWRM ToolBox which groups things into three major themes:

- ▶ the enabling environment – focusing on policies, regulations and financing strategies
- ▶ institutional arrangements – focusing on organizations and their structure and function, and capacity for adjusting to fulfil their future roles
- ▶ management instruments – focusing on the integrated mechanisms required to contribute towards more sustainable development, management and use of Kenya’s water resources.

Meanwhile, an Inter-ministerial Reform Secretariat has been formed to provide coordination and communication of the reform processes, and establish the benchmarks for monitoring and evaluation of the reforms.

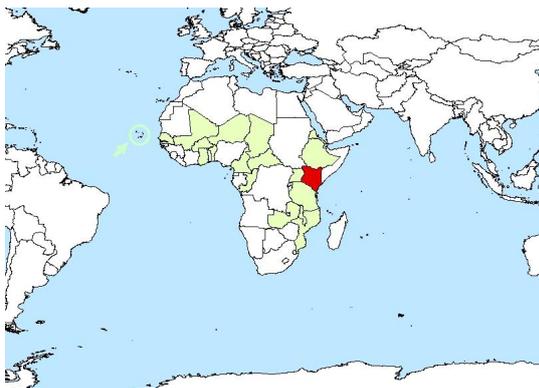
*Recognition*

By the closure of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Stakeholders Workshop held in February 2004, there was general consensus that with the current political goodwill and amicable relationship with senior water officials and other stakeholders, the Partnership should become a more visible and effective forum for national and local dialogue in the national IWRM planning process. This ultimately led the Kenya Water Institute (KEWI) in early 2005, to invite GWP to host the Kenya Water Partnership at their premises in Nairobi.

To institutionalise and strengthen the capacity of the Partnership to undertake and meet its objectives with increased efficiency and effectiveness, a full time programme officer was recruited into the Partnership earlier this year.

*A broader perspective*

The Kenya Water Partnership is supported in its role by the broader GWP programmes comprising the Partnership for African Water Development that is being conducted in Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia in Southern Africa, in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in Eastern Africa, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, and Congo in Central Africa and Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Senegal in West Africa (see map).



NEED TO DRAW A BETTER MAP WITH JUST THE CONCERNED COUNTRIES SHADED (JAMES) and Kenya marked as in red

Enlarge and you will see the countries shaded

The programme has provided much of the necessary funding required not only to support the participatory function of the Kenya and other GWP country water partnerships, and for bringing representatives of these countries together to exchange knowledge and experience, but for capacity building that gives guidance for the practical work that has to be done on the ground to get an accepted and realistic plan in place (see “Update” in this newsletter).

The role of the Partnership is clear: To sustain broad participation, consultation and communication among stakeholders at all levels during the development of the national

IWRM and Water Efficiency Plans so that Kenyans in all walks of life have the opportunity to be involved in – and in doing so take ownership of – the process and actions that will lead towards more sustainable water development and management for the benefit of all.

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Box 1.

“We all know that water is life. My Government is committed to ensuring that Kenyans have access to clean water. Plans are under way to carry out institutional reforms within the water sector. These will separate powers of policy formulation, regulation and water service delivery

Sustainable development of water resources is dependent on prudent management of our environment. Honourable Members know that this country is faced with serious environmental degradation. This is due to the reckless destruction of our forests and water catchments areas. My government promises to move fast. It will put in place measures to rehabilitate and protect our environment. I want to declare that, from now on, anyone caught destroying forests and water catchments areas will face the law.”

*Quote from President Mwai Kibaki’s address when opening Kenya’s 9<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Session, February 18, 2003.*

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Box 2.

### **Water Resources in Kenya**

Kenya is classified as a “chronically water scarce” country with a limited natural endowment of fresh water of only 647 m<sup>3</sup> per capita. This is projected to fall to 245 m<sup>3</sup> per capita by the year 2025 – well below the recommended minimum.

Kenya has a population of around 32 million people of which over 17 million live below the poverty line of \$1 a day. During the 1990’s, the percentage of people living below the poverty line averaged 50%. Over the same period, investments in water resource management shrunk significantly, thereby reducing the ability to increase the percentage of the population with access to potable water. This occurred in spite of the fact that Participatory Poverty Assessment studies undertaken in 1994 and 1996, and the drafting of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in 2001, consistently show that the poor ranked water as first or second priority in poverty alleviation.

Failure to stress this as a high priority in national planning documents led to serious under-funding of water resources management by the Treasury. This has often resulted in leaving water for the poor out of negotiated funding priorities with development partners.

It is well recognized today that there is need to mainstream social and economic equity in the Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Economic Recovery Strategies for higher priority funding. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers however, remain the most important

documents on which the World Bank and other Development partners base their negotiations for support to the less industrialized countries.

As stated in the main article, the government has undertaken sector-wide water reforms to address these challenges and the basic structures for meeting these challenges are already in place.

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Box 3.

### **Newsflash**

In the Budget this year, July 2005 – June 2006, the government has increased its allocation to the water sector by 20% meant especially for the arid areas and for the protection of water catchments areas.

Government is trying to harmonise the coordination of water related ministries, departments and activities through the Planning Ministry.