

Water services sector records high performance

The average number of boreholes drilled or constructed in one year in the past has been around 50 and that of dams/pans ranged around 40. In the Government's financial year, July 2005 to June 2006, which is the period that the water sector reforms programme took effect, a total of 227 boreholes have been drilled and 140 equipped providing an additional yield of 856.2 cubic metres per hour. In addition, 308 water pans/dams have been rehabilitated and constructed, contributing additional storage capacity of 6.4 million m³ (6.4 billion litres) of water. This amount alone is enough to meet Kenya water needs for six days.

To improve water supplies and sewerage services, 210 water supplies have been rehabilitated and eight sewerage schemes given a new lease of life in Kisumu, Kericho, Busia, Kakamega, Embu, Nyeri, Machakos and Thika. As these works went on, the water supplies raised over 200 million shillings in the 2005/06 financial year as revenue (Appropriation in Aid). This has been achieved through timely release of Authority to Incur Expenditures (AIE), timely payment of electricity bills and provision of water treatment chemicals. This year Kshs. 311.8 million is targeted as revenue from water supplies.

Performance contracts

Many factors have contributed to this turn of events but the most significant was the improvement of service delivery brought about by the water sector reforms. These were underpinned by performance contracts which not only set targets to be attained but monitored on a quarterly basis the milestones covered on the road to achieving them.

Operating under the Water Act 2002 comprehensive water sector reforms were put in place which included creation of seven regional-based Water Services Boards to take over water supply and sanitation services. The Water Services Regulatory Board (WSRB) was also set up to regulate the sector. The National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation which previously operated water supply schemes was transformed into the construction arm of the ministry to deal with development of water supply infrastructure.

By the end of June 2006 the WSRB had developed model Service Provision Agreements (SPAs) and processed 40 applications for those seeking to become Water Service Providers (WSPs). Similarly, in ensuring performance standards for the water services, existing quality and operational standards have been reviewed and customised into user-friendly documents.

Challenges

The key challenge being experienced in the transfer of water supply services to WSPs is the low incomes of many communities. Here, tariffs that would ensure self-sustainability are beyond reach of many water users. This has slowed down the process of transferring water supply services because such schemes fail to attract Service Providers. The Ministry is facilitating capacity building and community sensitisation to make such schemes viable and improve the sustainability of the sector.

Using the targets of the 2005-2006 as the benchmark, the Ministry through the National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation plans to rehabilitate 149 water pans/dams, and construct 20 new ones in this 2006/2007 Financial Year. This is expected to provide an additional six million cubic metres of water to serve 400,000 livestock units. A target of 189 new boreholes will be constructed mainly in the arid and semi arid areas to serve 150,000 people with clean water. In water supplies, the target is to rehabilitate 145 schemes and construct five new ones in Nakuru, Kisumu, Kitale, Bungoma and Webuye. Seven sewerage schemes are also lined up for rehabilitation and construction of Nkubu sewerage system scheme in will be done. A total of 200 new shallow wells will be constructed and 50 others rehabilitated.

Save for a few teething problems common in any reformed sector, water services are firmly on the road to full recovery.

Rock dam constructed in Mutomo, Kitui