

WATER SECTOR REFORMS

598 Ministry Staff set to Join Water Sector Institutions

A total of 598 employees are set to leave the Ministry any time now to join eight State corporations created two years ago in the water sector. This follows the completion of a selection exercise that gave priority for the Ministry staff and those of the National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation to apply for jobs that were advertised internally in May and June this year. This number falls short of the combined requirement by the corporations which stand at 684. The remaining 86 positions will be advertised in the open market. The skills that failed to meet the demand were in the Information Communication Technology, Accounts and Economists.

The Water Resources Management Authority (WRMA) leads with 371 staff taken. It is followed by the seven regional based Water Services Boards (WSB) that comprise Athi, Tana, Rift Valley, Lake Victoria North, Lake Victoria South, Coast and Northern with a combined total of 205; the Water Services Regulatory Board takes 14 and the Water Services Trust Fund eight. The remaining staff, majority of whom are operating water utilities within the water services board areas will be facilitated to take up employment with the Water Service Providers (WSP) who are continuously being contracted to run the schemes.

Outstanding issues

However, the separation of such staff from Government will await the conclusion of two key outstanding issues. One is the determination of whether the new water services providers (mainly water and sewerage companies) are public or private entities. This would give guidance on whether staff leaving government service to join the water service providers would either receive a separation (financial) package or transfer of services. If the WSPs are defined as private entities, the staff will be double lucky as they will get a pay package on exit from government and remain in the same job only under a different employer. If the WSPs are defined as public institutions, then the staff will get a transfer of service and move with their statutory provisions.

Another issue is the harmonization of the Audit and Exchequer Act and the Water Act in regard to government budgetary allocation. Discussions are still going on to determine whether the current mechanisms of allocating money to districts will remain or whether it will be possible to channel the funds through the WSBs. In the reformed sector, the WSBs are in charge of all water services in the country and district water offices are expected to dissolve automatically into the new set up.

New role of the Ministry

Once the pending issues are addressed, the separation and funding arrangements for the technical staff who are expected to join the WSPs will be clear for implementation. Majority are those whose skills are in the provision of water services and management of water resources. Under the reformed sector, these functions have been transferred to the corporations. The role of the Ministry is reduced to formulation of policy, sector coordination and resource mobilization. This will require not more than 200 staff who will be retained at the Ministry headquarters.

In the separation process, various cadres of staff will be affected differently. Those in the administrative (common) cadres such as accountants, human resource officers, clerical officers, secretaries, drivers etc will be redeployed to other sections within the Ministry that require their skills. Those who will not be taken will be referred back to the administrator of their schemes of service for redeployment in the wider public service. Luckily, there will be no mass redundancy as envisaged earlier. Nature has taken its course. From a high of 7,300 Ministry's staff a year ago, the numbers have gone down to 5,196 after having lost 700 through natural causes, 1,100 in Voluntary Early Retirement and now the 598 taken by the institutions.

Even though it is not clear what the optimal staffing levels of the water services providers will be as the process of contracting them is still going on, it is anticipated that improved services among them will result in increased employment opportunities. This will be possible through greater revenue collection and investment inflows that will spur rehabilitation and expansion of schemes. In the first year into the reform, over 50 water services providers have been contracted to run water utilities in an economical and sustainable manner.

Summary of the final selection for positions in Water Sector Institutions

Institutions Post	No of Posts Advertised	No. of Posts Filled	Vacant
Tana Water Services Board	30	20	10
Lake Victoria North WSB	37	30	7
Lake Victoria South WSB	40	29	11
Rift Valley WSB	41	40	1
Northern WSB	114	86	28
Water Services Regulatory Board	18	14	4
Water Services Trust Fund	15	8	7
Water Resources Mgt. Authority	<u>389</u>	<u>371</u>	<u>18</u>
TOTAL	<u>684</u>	<u>598</u>	<u>86</u>

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envisaged growth of the sector, the new water service providers will require to outsource skilled manpower on consultative basis or even in provision of goods and services. The ball is the court of the Water Services Boards who must hasten the pace of contracting the WSPs and facilitate the remaining staff in them.

