

WATER SECTOR REFORMS UPDATE

Following the completion of the water sector reforms, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation transferred the management and operation of water services to the Water Services Boards (WSBs) with effect from July 2005.

The functions of provisions of water services are regulated through and under the authority of a license by the Water Services Regulatory Board. The Water Services Boards are the sole mandated authorities to obtain the licenses for the provision of water services for their respective jurisdictions. The WSBs provide water services through Water Services Providers as agents by means of agreements.

The Ministry of Water & Irrigation transferred its functions for the provision of water services to the Water Services Boards within their respective areas of jurisdiction. The property, rights and liabilities of the Director of Water, are now vested in the Water Services Boards.

The Government, its statutory corporations and other authorities (including the National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation) transferred the ownership and utilities of its water services facilities to the WSBs. Water companies established by local authorities undertake the provision of water services and the overall control and management of water services facilities through an agreed legal framework with WSBs;

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and other community and self-help groups are required to enter into management agreements with WSBs regarding the management and control of water services facilities owned and used by them.

Water Staff Deployment

Following the implementation of comprehensive water sector reforms, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has now developed a comprehensive Human Resource Management (HRM) Strategy. This will be used as the guide in addressing human resource issues occasioned by the changes in institutional responsibilities introduced by the Water Act 2002. The preparation and implementation of the strategy is one of the final steps to be carried out directly by the Ministry during the reform transition.

June 30th 2006 is the completion date of the initial one year deployment of government staff to the Water Services Boards (WSBs) and other institutions. The initial deployment (July 2005 to June 2006) followed the implementation of the Transfer Plan which required the Ministry and the National Water

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Conservation and Pipeline Corporation (NWCP) to handover the functions of all water supply services to the WSBs.

Prior to and following the gazette of the "Transfer Plan" last year, approximately 7,600 employees from the Ministry and NWCP have been deployed to the new institutions on secondment. These include staff previously deployed in the provincial and district water offices and those in the regional offices of the NWCP.

The new HR strategy is premised on the principles of the government's Public Sector Reform Programme. The programme aims at aligning organizational structures to core-functions and having optimal staffing levels. It also involves embracing the Results Based Management initiative and re-engineering the traditional processes and tools to enhance public service delivery.

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This staff restructuring exercise is anchored at the Public Service Reform Secretariat (PSRS) since it is part of the broad reform programme taking place in the entire government and it is therefore not solely a Ministry of Water affair. That is why two key stakeholders committees have been formed at the PSRS; the Policy and the Implementation Committees. Their members are drawn from the Ministries of Water, Finance, Information and Labour as well as the Directorate of Personnel Management, the Public Service Commission and the Solicitor General. So far, the Policy Committee has approved the implementation plan of the HRM strategy.

As a first step, the staff requirement for each institution including the Ministry is being worked out with the help of both local and international experts. The restructuring of the roles of the Ministry and NWCP will necessitate the rationalization of the staffing requirements of the two organizations. Some of the employees are expected to be redeployed to the WSBs and other sector institutions from July 2006 onwards. Criteria for selection and placement of the staff will cover aspects such as schemes of service, past performance amongst others.

For those who may opt to leave before the strategy is implemented and those who may not get absorbed to the sector institutions, a separation strategy has been prepared for them in line with existing regulations on exit from government service. Details of the options and opportunities available as well as information on send-off package for those who will opt to leave or may not fit in the Ministry or sector institutions has been availed to staff. The new sector institutions have also been asked to wait for the separation plan to be completed before embarking on open market recruitment of their middle and lower level cadres. This is aimed at giving an edge to suitable staff from the government.

To run alongside the HRM Strategy will be a comprehensive training programme to prepare staff for the sector changes. It will entail re-orienting staff on their roles in the new institutions because their terms and conditions of employment will differ from those of the mainstream civil service.

It is expected that majority of the staff will take up employment with the numerous Water Services Providers (WSPs) that continue being contracted by the Boards in all parts of the country. Such WSPs will find a ready source of skilled and experienced staff in the management of water utilities and services.