



Government of the Republic of Kiribati

Water for Healthy Communities, Environments and Sustainable Development

Draft National Freshwater Resources Policy For Discussion

Coordinated by the National Water and Sanitation Committee

June 2006

This draft policy was initiated under the EU Pacific Water Governance Project, coordinated by SOPAC. It was developed by the National Water and Sanitation Committee assisted by Ian White, Australian National University, and advised by Tony Falkland Ecowise, Environmental, and Marc Overmars, SOPAC.

Government of Kiribati

National Freshwater Resources Policy

1. Title of the Policy

National Freshwater Resources Policy (NFRP)

2. Purpose and Consistency of the Policy

The NFRP provides the framework for the conservation, sustainable use and management of Kiribati's freshwater resources and for the provision of safe and adequate freshwater to island communities.

It is consistent with the National Development Strategies of 1996-1999, 2000-2003, the Draft National Development Strategy of 2004-2007, the Draft National Water Plan initiated by the United Nation Development Programme in 1992 and updated by the Water Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Works and Utilities in 2000 and it complements the Public Utilities Ordinance, particularly in the declaration and protection of groundwater reserves. It has particularly relevance to the Government's initiative to develop Growth Centres on islands and atolls other than Tarawa.

The NFRP is strongly linked to the Kiribati National Consultation on Sustainable Water Management and to regional initiatives such as the Ministerial Declaration on the 2003 Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management and to the United Nations' Millennium Declaration in 2000, "*to halve by the year 2015 the proportion of the world's population who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water*" and "*to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources*" and the target of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 of "*halving the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015*".

3. Previous References

In a statement to the Maneaba ni Maungatabu (Kiribati Parliament), on the opening of its fifth session on October 31, 1994, Te Beretitenti (The President) of the Republic, presented an outline of the Government policy on all areas of its responsibility. Those policies which had direct or indirect implications for the water sector of Kiribati were:

- Strong emphasis is placed on the improvement of living standard of an I-Kiribati.
- Resources and efforts will be directed towards developing subsistence and employment opportunities, and improving living conditions.
- Efforts to reduce population growth will continue.
- The resettlement programme will continue to be developed, new sources of livelihood explored, and basic essential services ensured and expanded.
- Efforts to promote Kiritimati Island as a focus of development will continue.

The *Draft National Water Plan*, developed in 1992 and updated in 2000 by the Water Engineering Unit of the then Ministry of Works and Energy, identified the need for national policy guidelines in order to develop priorities and to coordinate the water sector.

The Kiribati National Consultation on Sustainable Water Management, conducted as a lead up to the Pacific Regional Consultation on Water in Small Island Countries in 2002, clearly identified the continuing need for adequate supplies of safe drinking water and for better coordination of the water sector.

The Sigatoka 2002 Ministerial Declaration of the *Pacific Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management* called for the development of national instruments including national visions, policies, plans and legislation appropriate to each island country.

The Asian Development Bank Technical Assistance Project, *Promotion of Effective Water Management Policies and Practices* in 2004 developed a 20 year Kiribati Water Sector Road Map that set out strategies and a long-term action programme. A key initial 12-month task proposed was the development of national policies and procedures for the improvement of operation of the water sector.

The National Development Strategy 2003-2007 includes some policies and goals of direct relevance to the water sector.

- Raise the quality of life by improving supply and quality of water.
- Ensure sustainable use of water resources,
- Promote community participation for better use of water resources,
- Provide sound infrastructure and services at reasonable costs,
- Rehabilitate and expand existing water supply systems,
- Improve collection, storage, treatment and distribution of water,
- Rehabilitate the sewerage and sanitation system and improve its operation and management,
- Improve maintenance standards for government assets, and
- Ensure that all future construction projects comply with the Environment Act.

Finally, the development of National Water Policy is a keystone Technical Assistance Activity in the 2005 Water Component of the World Bank-AusAID-NZAID *Kiribati Adaptation Program, Phase II* (KAPII).

4. Requesting Agency

The National Freshwater and Sanitation Committee coordinated by the Office Te Beretitenti (OB)

5. Implementing Agency

The National Freshwater and Sanitation Committee coordinated by the Office Te Beretitenti (OB)

6. Other Implementing Organisations

Public Works Department, Ministry of Public Works and Utilities (MPWU)
Public Utilities Board, MPWU
Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)
Environment and Conservation Division, Ministry of Environment, Land and Agricultural Development (MELAD)
Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED)
Ministry of Line and Phoenix Development (MLPD)
The Meteorology Service, Ministry of Communications, Transport and Tourism Development (MCTTD)
Rural Unit, Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA)
Ministry of Education Youth & Sport Development (MEYSD)
Office of the President (OB)
Attorney Generals
Island Councils
Urban and Town Councils
Kiribati Women Federation (AMAK)
The Kiribati Association of NGOs (KANGO).

7. Background to the Formulation of Policy

There has been broad consultation on draft versions of this policy amongst stakeholders and with the community. All Government Agencies with responsibilities in the water and sanitation sector were involved through the National Water and Sanitation Committee in its drafting. The water and sanitation service providers, the Public Utilities Board in South Tarawa, the Water Engineering Unit of MPWU for outer islands and the Public Works Department of the MLDP for Kiritimati have all contributed to the development of the NFRP. Non-government organization members of the Committee received feedback on the NFRP from constituent members and Island Councils and the Churches have been given opportunities to comment and suggest improvements.

8. Justification for this Policy Initiative

Freshwater is a fragile, strategic national resource on which island communities and their economic growth depend, and whose security needs to be assured. In many islands, the quantity of water is limited, demand is increasing and the quality of water is easily compromised. As a result, water-borne diseases are common, particularly in infants. There are critical issues that need to be addressed through a coordinated and focused approach lead by the Government and involving the whole community. Issues that need to be urgently addressed include:

- Fragmented control, management and protection of freshwater resources;
- Conflicting demands for water;
- Insufficient knowledge and monitoring of freshwater resources;
- Microbially compromised fresh groundwater and limited use of rainwater;
- Excessive demand for freshwater;
- Limited community participation in freshwater management and conservation;
- Limited community understanding of responsible water use and management.

9. Statement of Policy

9.1 Policy Goal

“To ensure that communities have access to water of suitable quality and appropriate quantities and to appropriate sanitation to meet all reasonable health, environmental, and economic development needs”

9.2 Policy Objectives

Objective	Comments
1. To improve the safety of freshwater supplied from groundwater and rainwater systems.	Illness and death due to water-borne diseases are of great social and economic costs to the nation. Key elements here are improving the protection of water sources, supplying simple, cost-effective methods for treating community water supplies and increasing community understanding of water quality and water treatment.
2. To protect fresh groundwater resources from adverse human impacts.	The protection of groundwater sources used as supplies for communities is essential to the planning and management of groundwater supply systems in low islands. This involves questions of appropriate landuses, and appropriate regulatory and management strategies.
3. To improve knowledge of the quality and quantity of the nation’s freshwater resources and demand for them.	To sustainably manage and use water resources it is essential to have reliable, up-to-date information on the stocks and flows of water, on its quality and on current and projected demand for water. A key step in sustainable water management is monitoring
4. To improve knowledge and management of water resources under climatic extremes.	To manage water and sanitation services during climatic extremes, such as droughts, heavy rains and storm surges it is necessary to have information on the onset of extreme conditions
5. To improve outer island water supplies	Outer island water supplies require special attention. The provision of timely assistance, advice and training opportunities is essential
6. To increase community awareness and understanding of water resource and sanitation issues	Greater community awareness and better understanding of water resource and sanitation issues can lead to improvements in health, water conservation and improved participation.

7. To increase community participation in water resource and sanitation management.	Increased participation by the community is essential for strengthening community ownership of water and sanitation systems, for supporting conservation strategies and for building partnerships between government agencies and the public.
8. To increase the use of rainwater harvesting.	Rainwater is an underused resource despite existing building regulations. Increase in the use of rainwater can reduce risk of contamination and increase resilience.
9. To develop instruments to help manage demand and allocation of water.	Controlling increasing demand and ensuring equitable allocation of water is an essential step in sustainable water management. A range of policy, regulatory and economic instruments are available to manage demand and allocation and to use water efficiently.
10. To review and revise, where necessary, all legislation, regulations and organisational responsibilities relevant to water and sanitation.	Improving the efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and coordination of government institutions in water and sanitation will improve planning, services and partnerships with the community.
11. To ensure cost effective operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation systems.	Effective operation and maintenance of water supply systems is essential to efficient service provision, the reduction of unaccounted for water losses, and cost recovery.
12. To integrate sustainable management of water and sanitation into all aspects of development and operation.	Management and protection of freshwater and associated land resources are essential for addressing declining quantity and quality of water resources, developing environmentally responsible solutions and for guaranteeing future opportunities.

9.3 Intended Policy Outcomes

The national water policy is intended to address priority concerns in both the short and long term. Expected outcomes from policy implementation are aimed at attaining sustainable management of water and related land resources with increased community participation and the sustainable delivery of safe water services.

Expected outcomes of national water resource policy implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public health due to a decrease in water-borne diseases; • Equitable access to safe freshwater; • Protection of freshwater resources from adverse impacts of human activities; • Better knowledge of the quantity and quality of fresh water resources • Efficient allocation of water to various users; • Improved risk assessment for the water sector; • Greater public awareness of water resources issues; • Enhanced water and sanitation educational programs;

- Increased stakeholder involvement in water protection of freshwater sources;
- Increased community participation in the conservation and management of water and water sources
- More effective governance, monitoring and assessment of water resources
- Strengthened institutional capacity and training in the water sector;
- Clear identification of roles and responsibilities;
- Improved levels of cost recovery;
- Improved access to donor and loan schemes.

10. Strategies for Achieving Policy Objectives

A range of strategies have been identified to achieve the policy objectives of the NFRP.

1. Short to Medium Term	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formalise the terms of reference of the National Water and Sanitation Committee 2. Review, develop and implement the 10 year National Water Master Plan including plans for both urban areas and outer islands. 3. Carry out an assessment of the quantity and quality of national water resources. 4. Assess the personnel and training needs in the water sector. 5. Develop appropriate water quality guidelines. 6. Develop rainwater harvesting and associated planning and building code guidelines. 7. Develop an equitable loans scheme for rainwater systems. 8. Develop a community and youth education and awareness programme for freshwater. 9. Secure support for improvement to outer island water supplies. 10. Develop a water pricing system for urban supplies. 11. Review non-polluting sanitation systems. 12. Develop indicators of improved water and sanitation management
2. Longer Term	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review, improve and initiate, where necessary, legislation and regulations relevant to freshwater and sanitation. 2. Review and rationalise, where necessary the roles of government agencies in water and sanitation. 3. Strengthen community participation in water resource management by establishing village level committees. 4. Develop plans for the continual improvement of urban water and sanitation systems. 5. Develop a national water resource monitoring, assessment and reporting system. 6. Develop a training scheme for water and sanitation specialists. 7. Develop a system to warn of climatic extremes and their impacts on water supplies. 8. Develop legislation for the protection of groundwater resources. 9. Develop capacity for water resource assessment and management. 10. Support and participate in regional and international water, climate and sanitation programmes. 11. Review policy and implementation every 5 years.

11. Resource and Financial Implications

It is envisaged that to effectively implement this policy, three additional water specialists will be required. One to concentrate on sanitation issues in urban areas, one to focus on outer island supplies and the other to concentrate on community education, awareness, participation and non-polluting sanitation systems. It is possible that two of these positions could be funded from improved cost recovery from water pricing in urban areas while the third position may be supported by donor funding. Additional resources for outer island water supply assessment and monitoring may be available through donor assisted programmes.

12. Legislative Implications

There is a need to review all legislation and regulations pertaining to water and to the protection of groundwater supply sources. Rationalisation, improvements and new legislation may be required.

13. Proposed Implementation Schedule

Implementation of the NFRP will take effect from the time that it is approved by Cabinet. Implementation will be overseen by the National Water and Sanitation Committee coordinated by OB and reporting to Cabinet. The Committee will review policy implementation annually and the NFRP will be formally reviewed after 5 years.

14. Recommendation

That Cabinet approves this policy.

15. Responsible Officer

Permanent Secretary
Office Te Beretitenti

16. Submission Date