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ACCESS TO SANITATION AND SAFE WATER:
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND LOCAL ACTIONS

Formulation of WatSan policies in Pakistan

Dr Murtaza Malik, Dr. Tameez Ahmad & Thowai Sha Zai, Pakistan

This paper describes the process of formulation of National Drinking Water and Sanitation Policies in Pakistan. The process, which was led by the Ministry of Environment and supported by UNICEF, involved evidence based advocacy for policy development; preparation of a working paper; development of background papers for stakeholder consultation; preparation of provincial papers on the basis of stakeholders' workshops; development of draft policies on the basis of provincial papers; circulation of the draft policies among relevant federal ministries, provincial departments and other stakeholders; and finalization in light of stakeholders' comments. The National Sanitation Policy has been approved by the Federal Cabinet and is currently under implementation. The Drinking Water Policy, however, is still in the draft form due to delays mainly attributable to fragmentation of the responsibility of water resource conservation, management and control across several Ministries and line departments.

Background

In Pakistan, 66 percent and 54 percent of the total population has access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities, respectively [Government of Pakistan, 2006]. Coverage in rural areas, however, is considerably lower than the national average where about 50 percent of population is estimated to have access to improved drinking water and 40 percent access to sanitary latrines. The low drinking water and sanitation coverage in Pakistan has been attributed, among others, to the lack of comprehensive policy framework for the sector.

In order to step up its efforts to achieve water and sanitation related Millennium Development Goals, the Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan, with the support of UNICEF, embarked upon formulation of the National Drinking Water and Sanitation Policies in March 2005. The process of formulation of National Sanitation Policy was led by the Ministry itself while that of the National Drinking Water Policy was managed by Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency, an attached department of the Ministry. This paper describes the process adopted for formulation of the policies, their salient features and key lessons learned.

The process

The main steps involved in formulation of the National Drinking Water and Sanitation Policies are briefly described as follows:

- The need for formulation of Water and Sanitation policies was advocated through briefings for decision makers as well as submission of a comprehensive note highlighting the key sector issues (e.g. absence of comprehensive policy framework for the sector, extremely slow progress in the provision of services, deteriorating water quality, high morbidity and mortality resulting from water and sanitation related diseases), change in government structures for service delivery as a result of devolution/decentralization in the country, and government commitment to Poverty Reduction Strategy and Millennium Development Goals. Government officials at the middle management level also played a key role in advocating at the higher level. The evidence based advocacy proved to be the most crucial in the entire process as it resulted in formal Government decision to develop the policies.
- A working paper outlining the key areas to be covered by and process to be adopted for formulation of the policies was prepared. The working paper, after the formal approval of the Ministry of Environment, was presented for review and approval of the National Coordination Committee on Water and

Sanitation (NCCWS) and subsequently improved in light of the inputs. The NCCWS also decided to develop separate policies for water and sanitation sub-sectors instead of a single consolidated sector policy.

- Two drafting committees, one each for Drinking Water Policy and Sanitation Policy, were constituted. These committees comprised the representatives of the line federal ministries such as Planning Commission, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development as well as NGOs and renowned experts from the private sector.
- A background paper for stakeholders' consultation was prepared. The paper provided a description of the key sector issues as well as guidelines for conducting stakeholders' workshops. It recommended division of participants of the stakeholders' workshop into five groups i.e. (i) definitions and current situation, (ii) institutional and legislative framework, (iii) financing and sustainability, (iv) technological aspects, and (v) health and hygiene education and research. The background paper, however, made it clear that the participants of the workshops, if deemed appropriate, may form additional groups to deliberate on additional issues/aspects which they think should be covered in the policies. The background papers were reviewed by the members of the drafting committees and revised in light of the feedback.
- A team of consultants was engaged to assist the policy formulation process. One consultant was recruited for each province to support provincial consultations and prepare the provincial policy paper on drinking water and sanitation. Two national consultants, one each for water and sanitation, were engaged at the federal level who were tasked with the responsibility of synthesizing the provincial papers and drafting of the national policies under the guidance of the respective drafting committees. The consultants were provided copies of relevant literature including, inter-alia, government's strategies and plans pertaining to the sector, documents of various projects and programmes, proceedings of conferences and workshops held on the sector over the last decade or so and relevant policies of several countries.
- The policy formulation process was formally launched by the Federal Minister for Environment at a kick-off meeting of stakeholders held in Islamabad in July 2005. This was followed by a total of 24 consultative workshops organized throughout the country. These workshops were led by the line provincial/regional departments (i.e. Local Government and Rural Development Department or Public Health Engineering Department). The participants of these workshops include government functionaries and elected representatives at the provincial, district and sub-district levels and representatives of NGOs, communities, development partners and media. In addition to the formal government-led consultative workshops, support was provided to NGOs for holding independent public dialogues in major cities, towns and rural areas where general public/communities shared their views on key water and sanitation issues and gave their opinion on what the policy should include (Network for Consumer Protection, 2005). The bottom-up stakeholders' consultations process, beginning right from sub-district level to national level, also proved to be crucial as it not only ensured contributions from all stakeholders but also resulted in ownership and acceptance of the policy. The stakeholders' consultation process followed by the Government of Pakistan compares well with the process followed by the Government of Nepal for development of integrated policy for water and sanitation (Shrestha, Tayler and Scott, 2005).
- Provincial/regional consultants, on the basis of review of province-related literature, inputs of the stakeholders' workshops and public dialogue, prepared six papers i.e. one each for four provinces, Northern Areas and Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The two national consultants drafted the National Drinking Water Policy and National Sanitation Policy on the basis of the provincial papers. These policies were reviewed by the respective drafting committees and revised/improved accordingly. The drafting committees played important role in addressing and resolving the conflicting perspectives, creating consensus and harmonizing the policies with government long term plans and ongoing major initiatives.
- The draft policies were circulated among various ministries, provincial departments and other stakeholders and also placed on the Ministry's website for public comments and subsequently revised in light of comments.
- The final draft of the National Sanitation Policy was presented to the Federal Cabinet in October 2006 and approved. It is currently in the process of implementation. The draft National Drinking Water Policy, however, has not been processed for approval owing to the fact that the current mandates (referred to as Rules of Business in Pakistan) of line ministries (including Ministry of Environment) do not specify as to which is the lead ministry for the drinking water supply at the Federal level. The Policy was reviewed jointly by the Ministries of Environment, Water and Power, Health and UNICEF in October

2007, and subsequently forwarded to the Cabinet and Planning & Development Divisions for seeking their guidance on sending it directly to the Cabinet for approval or forwarding it to the Ministry of Water and Power for incorporating in the National Water Policy which has been developed by the Ministry of Water and Power. Both the Divisions recommended that given the very specific nature and scope of the two policies, and Pakistan's commitment to the MDG related to drinking water, a stand-alone policy on Drinking Water was required. Based on the above recommendation, the Ministry of Environment has shared the latest version of the Policy with the line Federal Ministries and Provincial Governments for their review and endorsement before processing it for consideration of the Federal Cabinet for approval.

Salient features of the policies

The key aspects of the approved National Sanitation Policy, inter-alia, include scope (covering excreta disposal, solid and liquid waste management and health and hygiene); vision, goal and objectives; policy principles, policy guidelines concerning management of solid and liquid waste in urban and rural areas; awareness, education and training; capacity building; financing; public-private partnership; disaster preparedness and response; cross sectoral issues; gender; public consultations; local governance; incentives and rewards; targets; roles and responsibilities of the government and other stakeholders; and implementation and monitoring mechanism (Ministry of Environment, 2006).

The salient features of the draft National Drinking Water Policy include definitions of drinking water, safe water and access (in terms of travel time and quantity); goal; policy principles; policy guidelines regarding increasing access, protection and conservation of water resources, water treatment and safety, appropriate technologies and standardization, community participation and empowerment, public awareness, capacity development, public private partnership, research and development, emergency preparedness and response, coordinated planning and implementation, legislation; and implementation and monitoring.

Major lessons learned

- Evidence-based advocacy played a major role in influencing the Government's decision for policy formulation.
- The process of formulation of both drinking water and sanitation polices commenced simultaneously. The raised profile of sanitation, and the momentum generated, as a result of the 2nd South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN), which was held in Islamabad in September 2006 and attended, among others by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, however, helped expedite finalization of the National Sanitation Policy and its subsequent approval by the Federal Cabinet.
- Country wide stakeholders' participation through formal workshops and informal public dialogues created ownership and acceptance of the policy in addition to providing opportunities for building it on the best practices on the ground e.g. sanitation policy adopted "Community Led Total Sanitation" as one of the major strategies based on UNICEF-supported pilot initiative in District Mardan of the North West Frontier Province. This is in line with the findings of a study of sanitation policies of several countries carried out by WEDC (WEDC, 2005).
- The Ministry of Environment had four federal secretaries transferred during the process of preparation of the policies. The federal minister was also replaced during this time. These administrative changes significantly delayed the overall process.
- The task of formulation of Drinking Water Policy was assigned to the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency and that of the Sanitation Policy was given to the Environment Wing of the Ministry of Environment. The handling of these tasks by two separate wings of the same ministry resulted in coordination problems and subsequent delays. Similarly, managing a team of six consultants from different provinces also proved to be a challenging task and caused coordination problems.
- The management of water sector in Pakistan is quite complex as it spans across the jurisdiction of several ministries, departments and agencies. It is also a sensitive issue given the acute water shortage the country is facing and the associated problem of allocation across several sectors (e.g. drinking, irrigation, industrial) and geographic regions. These and the facts that (a) the issue of lack of clarity in the Rules of Business with regard to lead role for drinking water supply was not taken into account and addressed at the outset, and (b) one of the leading Ministry in the Sector i.e. Ministry of Water and Power was not brought on board at the outset, delayed finalization and approval of the National Drinking Water Policy.
- Considering the fact that sanitation in Pakistan has always been given low priority relative to water

supply, it was decided to develop a stand alone policy for sanitation. This has led to high priority being accorded to sanitation by the Federal as well as provincial governments through development of provincial sanitation strategies and action plans. This finding is in agreement with that of a study of sanitation policies of several countries carried out by WEDC (WEDC, 2005).

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Note/s

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan or the organization they work for.

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national drinking water policy, sanitation, watsan, Pakistan, formulation process, UNICEF

Contact details

Dr. Murtaza Malik (mumalik@unicef.org) and
Thowai Sha Zai (tzai@unicef.org),
UNICEF, Pakistan.

Dr. Tameez Ahmad (tahmad@unicef.org),
UNICEF, Nigeria (formerly UNICEF Pakistan)