



Water supply, sanitation and the PRSP in Malawi¹

DISCUSSION PAPER



WATERAID/JON SPALL

WaterAid – water for life

WaterAid is the UK's only major charity dedicated exclusively to the provision of safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people.

The President of Malawi launched the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in April 2002. The planned activities within it are grouped according to four main pillars of poverty reduction:

1. Rapid sustainable pro-poor economic growth and structural transformation
2. Human capital development
3. Improvement of the quality of life of the most vulnerable
4. Good governance

Water and sanitation feature within the first and second pillars. The rural infrastructure goal of pillar one includes an objective to increase access to good drinking water and sanitation. The preventative healthcare goal of pillar two includes an objective to improve the quality, access and equity of essential healthcare, which includes sanitation and safe water.

The PRSP acknowledges that rural infrastructure in Malawi is deficient and that there is a need to provide potable water supplies and reasonable sanitation facilities. It clearly recognises that the provision of, and equitable access to, water supplies and sanitation are central to poverty reduction due to their direct links to health and productivity. It refers to the high priority placed on improved access to safe water during district consultations in the preparation of the PRSP.

The PRSP's overall goal relating to water supply and sanitation is to "increase access to good drinking water and sanitation". The main specific aims are to "construct and rehabilitate water facilities" and to "reduce incidence of waterborne diseases". Targets of the numbers of households with access to potable water and sanitary disposal are set, mostly in terms of hardware such as the number of boreholes or small dams constructed and



WATERAID/JON SPAULL

extent, the Ministry of Health and Population. The main stakeholders in the Malawi water sector are the MoWD and departments, the private sector, NGOs and civil society organisations. International donors also set up and fund their own water and sanitation projects.

The roles and inter-relationships of the various players are not well established or defined. This is especially true of governance responsibilities ie planning, budgeting and the preparation of investment plans. The fragmentation of the sector also affects responsibilities for operation and delivery, such as project planning, the system design, contracting, supervision and the coordination of implementation of different software and hardware aspects of a project. A key example of this is the haphazard implementation of the newly established guidelines. The lack of coordination is a major contributory factor to the overall poor performance of the sector, which is failing to deliver safe water supplies to poor people.

the number of VIP latrines and sanitation awareness campaigns.

There is concern that the targets identified in the PRSP differ from those set out in the water supply and sanitation sector reviews undertaken in 1998.² The sector review priorities and targets placed more emphasis on software issues such as capacity building, co-ordination and management information systems. Representatives of civil society were involved in the sector reviews, but not the PRSP process. While the PRSP advocates implementing work that has a direct impact on poverty and focuses on the delivery of measurable objectives with unit costs, it neglects important weaknesses of the sector relating to improving the sector delivery and the overall governance mechanisms.

The main bodies responsible for the provision of water supplies in Malawi are the Ministry of Water Development (MoWD), the Water Boards and, to a lesser



WATERAID/JON SPAULL

As Mrs H G Kawalewale, Secretary for Water Development, noted in November 1999: “There seems to be a lack of proper documentation on the sector’s activities. A lot of activities were taking place by various players and some were not properly documented. There is a need for the Ministry, in collaboration with other actors, to develop a well-planned water monitoring system to cover all the activities of all the water sector actors. This would enable the Ministry to gather valuable information for both policy formulation and regulatory processes.”

The challenge for the Malawi water and sanitation sector, in light of both the PRSP and the problems highlighted above, is one of consolidation and co-ordination. The sector actors would then be in a better position to support efforts to integrate the voices of the poor within the formal process of PRSP strategy formulation. They would also be able to assist in co-ordinating contributions and promoting best practice in the development of the sector including capacity building of systems and skills at District level.

- 1 Based on a WATSAN-PRSP Poverty Reduction and Water Access in Sub-Saharan Africa Research Report for Malawi Case Study report. M. G. Tsoka, N. Nyirenda, L. Milazi and S. Sugden of WaterAid, 2002.
- 2 Malawi Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Review. Ir. H.P.J. van Schaik and W.R.G. Mandowa, December 1998 and “Water and sanitation sector programme review up to the year 2020” – Ministry of Water Development, May 1998

For further information contact
WaterAid
Prince Consort House
27-29 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7UB

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7793 4500
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7793 4545
Website: wateraid.org.uk

Email: wateraid@wateraid.org.uk
Charity registration number 288701

August 2002