



Ministry of Water
and Irrigation



Conference Background Note

East Africa Regional Conference “Accelerating Access to Sanitation”

26-28 November 2007

Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

Organised by

the Kenyan Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MWI), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the KfW Development Bank (KfW)

Main Objective

To raise awareness for sanitation, facilitate exchange between experts and different stakeholders on challenges, bottlenecks and perspectives of scaling-up access initiatives, compile lessons learnt and reinforce networking on sanitation. The conference will be a contribution to the International Year of Sanitation 2008.

Background

Worldwide, billions of people lack access to basic sanitation facilities – and to this day, sub-Saharan Africa remains the main focus of concern. The UN Monitoring System states that only 37% of people living in sub-Saharan Africa had access to basic sanitation in 2004, compared to a global average of 59%. Somewhere in the world, every fifteen seconds, a child dies of diarrhoea, a total of two million children a year. At least 2.6 billion people still have no access to sustainable, basic sanitation worldwide. Moreover, these problems are likely to increase in sub-Saharan Africa as the process of urbanisation is moving at a rate that exceeds the ability of most governments to expand infrastructure and social benefits. Even though these facts are well-known amongst experts, sanitation has still not risen to the top of the political agenda.

The sanitation situation is particularly critical among the urban poor and the region is likely to miss the MDG target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to basic sanitation by 2015 – unless awareness can be raised dramatically and investment increased between now and 2015. The urgent need to accelerate access to sanitation is more than obvious.

Many of the MDGs are not achievable without sustainable sanitation and hygiene education. Recognising the impact of sanitation on public health, poverty reduction, environment and economic and social development, the General Assembly of the United Nations (GA) declared 2008 an International Year of Sanitation (IYS) in order to raise awareness of the importance of sanitation. The GA expressed its concern at the slow and inadequate progress made in achieving the global sanitation target, and stated that progress should be made through active commitment and action by all stakeholders.

The objective of the conference is...

...to set the course for significant improvements in the sector and to initialise actions on the ground with large-scale impact and in a short timeframe. The conference aims not only to raise awareness of the sanitation challenge and to identify obstacles and bottlenecks, but also to present perspectives and successful approaches:

- Contribute to the achievement of the MDGs by raising political awareness on sustainable sanitation
- Share experiences and lessons learnt in sanitation and the promotion of hygiene
- Develop global and regional visions of what makes sanitation efforts sustainable
- Establish and strengthen cooperation and networks among the various stakeholders
- Provide and compile information which will help decision makers (including civil society) to assess different sanitation systems and appropriate institutional approaches
- Identify support mechanisms and financing instruments for accelerating pro-poor sanitation provision
- Agree on a way forward to significantly improve the sanitation situation in the region by 2015 and to enhance networking / facilitation of alliances beyond the conference

Key topics

Six key topics will be addressed during the conference:

Day 1 Challenges and Perspectives for Scaling up Actions	Day 2 Accelerating Access for Sustainable Sanitation - Initiatives
<p>The Political Challenge: How to put sanitation on top of the political agenda?</p> <p>The Institutional Challenge: How to improve cooperation between institutions of different sectors?</p> <p>The Financial Challenge: Appropriate strategies for financing investment and ensuring sustainable operation of sanitation systems.</p>	<p>Awareness raising and marketing strategies.</p> <p>Technologies, costs, Capacity Development.</p> <p>How to set up an appropriate legal and planning framework that facilitates sustainable sanitation.</p>

A wide range of sub-topics and initiatives will be presented by key players from both regional and international levels and discussed in the context of the key topics, including: Pro-poor orientation on policy and implementation levels, regulation and supervision, social marketing concepts, roll out of sustainable concepts, involvement of the private sector, etc. for scaling up and accelerating actions for sustainable sanitation. For each of the key topics output papers will be drafted and reviewed at the conference. The conference results will comprise lessons learnt as well as recommendations on concrete actions that should be initiated in order to accelerate access to sanitation in East Africa.

About 180 participants, presenters, keynote speakers, etc. from 25 countries and from major sanitation institutions and development partner organisation that support sanitation are expected to attend the conference.