



Policy Brief #1

Policy Framework on African Wastewater Management and Sanitation Provision

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The Issue

Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene has been recognized by the international community as a basic human right ([UN Resolution 64/292](#)) that is essential to realizing all other human rights. However, a large section of the global population still faces the challenge of accessing these most basic services. An estimated [40 per cent](#) of the global population is affected by water scarcity, while 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services like flush toilets and pit latrines ([WHO 2016](#)). In addition, more than [80 per cent of wastewater](#) that is generated by human activities globally is discharged into rivers, the sea and other water bodies without any treatment resulting in approximately [1.8 billion people](#) consuming drinking water that is contaminated by faecal matter. Millions of people die every year from disease associated with inadequate water supply, poor sanitation and poor hygiene. Unclean water

and poor sanitation-related diseases are the second highest causes of death in children under the age of five, with deaths of more than [842 000 children per year](#) caused by diarrhoeal diseases linked to poor hygiene.

It has been recognized at all levels (global, continental, national and sub-national) that water is essential for achieving sustainable development and for the eradication of poverty and hunger. However, it is estimated that by 2050, 50 per cent of the global population may be living under water stressed conditions and that as much of [45 per cent](#) of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) may come from water-stressed regions. Water scarcity coupled with poor water quality and inadequate sanitation have been found to have a negative impact on food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for [poor families and communities around the world](#).



Global Policy Responses

The Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, world leaders crafted the [Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#) – a global vision of eight goals and their related targets aimed at fighting poverty and its resultant conditions. Various programmes and projects were developed and implemented during the 15 years the MDG framework was in operation (2000-2015), with successes and failures being recorded at both global and individual country levels. Global and national assessments of what was achieved under the MDGs have shown that “with targeted interventions, sound strategies, adequate resources and political will, even poor countries can make [dramatic and unprecedented progress](#)” (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015).

[MDG 7](#), target C provided the global targets for safe drinking water and access to improved sanitation.



MDG7 – TARGET 7

“HALVE, BY 2015, THE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND BASIC SANITATION”

Africa fell short of the MDG 7 Target C even though sub-Saharan Africa achieved a 20 per cent increase in the use of improved sources of drinking water. The global MDG target for access to safe drinking water was met in 2010 – 5 years ahead of schedule. About 2.6 billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources since 1990 (UN 2015). However, [663 million people](#) globally still do not have access to safe drinking water.

The world did not achieve the MDG target for access to improved sanitation. Africa in particular, made little progress in attaining sanitation goals as defined by the MDGs with improved sanitation continuing to elude poor communities and individuals. About 70 per cent of the 1.3 million diarrhoea-related deaths of children under 5 years in 2008 were in Africa. It is clear that interventions aimed at improving access to improved sanitation need to include provision of wastewater collection and treatment facilities to avoid the negative impacts of releasing untreated wastewater into the environment. A global average of [80 per cent](#) of untreated wastewater is discharged into the environment with figures from Africa being as high as [92 per cent](#). This remains a major challenge in Africa.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) have succeeded the MDGs, which came to an end in 2015, as the overarching development framework for the world for the next 15 years. The [SDG 6](#), together with its 11 indicators, provides the current global framework for access to safe water and sanitation.



SDG6

“TO ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE WATER SOURCES AND SANITATION FOR ALL”

As was the case with the MDGs, it will be necessary to keep track of global progress towards achieving the SDGs. Monitoring of SDG 6 specifically began with the establishment of a global baseline for its 11 indicators. A [synthesis report](#) on SDG 6 is currently being developed with publication planned for May 2018. The report is expected to feed into discussions of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and in-depth review of SDG 6 in 2018.



Africa's Policy Framework

Africa continues to face issues of endemic poverty and under-development perpetuated by various underlying socio-economic problems. For the majority of the African countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, economic performance has been poor since the [oil crisis](#) of the mid-1970's and the later the [financial crises](#) that began in 2007. In addition to purely economic factors, poor governance, political instability and civil strife, as well as conflict within and between countries contribute towards Africa's challenges.

The continent's poor economic performance has led to growing budgetary constraints and fierce competition for public resources. This in turn causes decreases in financial allocations for social services such as health, education, safe drinking water supply and sanitation.

As is recognized and stressed in numerous continental policy pronouncements, water has a vital role in responding to the socio-economic conditions of Africa. It is a widely agreed fact that the success of the various economic instruments in place to address poverty and underdevelopment in Africa depends heavily on the sustainable availability of water resources. By the same token, success in economic development efforts is needed to ensure a continued and sustainable flow of funds for the development of water resources.

"Due to poverty, access to adequate water and sanitation is low in Africa. Yet due to the inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, there is a high incidence of communicable diseases that reduce vitality and economic productivity on the continent"

The Africa Water Vision 2025

Access to clean water and sanitation is still a major challenge in Africa. Nearly [half of all people](#) using unimproved sources of drinking water live in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, [54 per cent](#) of the population in 47 African countries still lack adequate sanitation facilities. Only 248 million people gained access to sanitation between 1990 and 2015 while the population without an improved sanitation facility in 2015 had [increased by 289 million](#) since 1990.

High rates of population growth, rapid urbanization (especially unplanned informal settlements), desertification, increased industrialization, drought and the effects of climate change often surpass efforts to provide clean water and sanitation services to households and communities. As a result, the

health of people, water resources and ecosystems continue to be at risk, threatening economic development.

It is important to note that the inadequate access to basic safe water supply and sanitation services is not necessarily a result of inadequate availability of the resource. Inadequate levels of funding and poor technology and infrastructure have been identified as major limitations to achieving regional targets for water and sanitation. Therefore, concerted efforts are urgently required to tackle the root causes of inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. More still needs to be done on the continent to fully integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Agenda 2063

[Agenda 2063](#) provides a collective vision and roadmap for Africa's development, clearly emphasizing the role of integrated economic, social and environmental aspects in continental aspirations. Specific mention of access to safe water supply and sanitation is made under Aspiration 1. Water and sanitation are recognized among the 'basic necessities for life' and indicators of performance in global quality of life measures. Agenda 2063 also calls for Africa's natural endowments, environment and ecosystems to be healthy, valued and protected as well as equitable and sustainable use and management of Africa's water resources for socioeconomic development, regional cooperation and the environment.

The Africa Water Vision 2025

[The Africa Water Vision](#) was developed as the continent's response and overall policy framework to address the key challenges facing the water sector.

The [Africa Water Vision 2025](#) (the Vision) is one of "an Africa where there is an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socioeconomic development, regional cooperation, and the environment" (Africa Water Vision 1995).

Policy statements contained in the Vision are as follows:

1. Sustainable access to a safe and adequate water supply and sanitation to meet the basic needs of all;
2. Water inputs towards food and energy security are readily available;
3. Water for sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity is adequate in quantity and quality;

4. Water-resource institutions have been reformed to create an enabling environment for effective and integrated management of water in national and transboundary water basins, including management at the lowest appropriate level;
5. Water basins serve as a basis for regional cooperation and development, and are treated as natural assets for all within such basins;
6. There is an adequate number of motivated and highly skilled water professionals;
7. There is an effective and financially sustainable system for data collection, assessment and dissemination for national and transboundary water basins;
8. There are effective and sustainable strategies for addressing natural and human-made problems affecting water resources, including climate variability and change;
9. Water is financed and priced to promote equity, efficiency, and sustainability;
10. There is political will, public awareness and commitment among all for sustainable management of water resources, including the mainstreaming of

gender issues and youth concerns and the use of participatory approaches.

The Framework for Action, together with the milestones and targets contained within the Vision document provide direction towards its implementation. Individual countries are encouraged to develop and implement programmes aimed at achieving the following:

1. Strengthening governance of water resources;
2. Improving water wisdom (sustainable use of water);
3. Meeting urgent water needs (which includes expanding safe water-supply and sanitation services to meet basic human needs; and
4. Strengthening the financial base for the desired water future.

The Vision milestones and targets are the intermediate goals that are to be reached at different levels and specific times within the framework of the overall Vision. Some of the milestones that specifically target access to safe water supply and sanitation services are provided in Table 1 below.

Actions	Targets			Corresponding SDG 6 Targets
	2005	2015	2025	
1. Proportion of people without access				
• to safe and adequate water supply	Reduce by 25%	Reduce by 75%	Reduce by 95%	(6.1) By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
• to safe and adequate sanitation	Reduce by 25%	Reduce by 70%	Reduce by 95%	(6.2) By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open-defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
2. Conservation and restoration of environment in biodiversity and life-supporting ecosystems		Implemented in 100% of countries	Implemented in 100% of river basins	(6.3) By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
• allocation of sufficient water for environmental sustainability	Implemented in 30% of countries	Implemented in 100% of countries		(6.4) By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity
• conserving and restoring watershed ecosystems	Under development			(6.6) By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

Extracted from the [Africa Water Vision 2025](#)



The Africa Water Vision 2025 advocates awareness and consensus at all levels. These messages may be revised from

time to time to reflect local and changing circumstances. An initial set of messages is presented below.

Africa Water Vision Messages

1. Provide safe and adequate water and sanitation for all.
2. Make equitable and sustainable use of Africa's water resources.
3. Ensure sustainable development and management of water resources for all.
4. Use water resources wisely to promote agricultural development and food security.
5. Develop water resources to stimulate socio-economic development.
6. Treat water as a natural asset for all in Africa.
7. Share management of international water basins to stimulate efficient mutual regional economic development.
8. Ensure adequate water for life-supporting ecosystems.
9. Manage watersheds and flood plains to safeguard lives, land and water resources.
10. Price water to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability.

[Africa Water Vision 2025](#)