



The Case for:

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**THE NATIONAL WATER & SANITATION
COMMITTEE**



Pattern of Islands, North Tarawa, Kiribati

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This discussion paper was developed under the EU Pacific Water Governance Project, coordinated by SOPAC. It was written by Ian White, Australian National University in collaboration with:

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The accompanying Kiribati National Water and Sanitation Background Document provides background information on global and regional initiatives, the now defunct previous whole-of-government committee on water and recommendations of recent studies and reviews in Kiribati that concern the formation of a National Committee.

Why Revive the National Water and Sanitation Committee?

Infant mortality rates in Kiribati due to water-borne diseases and lack of adequate hygiene are amongst the worst in the Pacific. Water-borne diseases also have substantial social and economic costs amongst adult populations. The Government of Kiribati Project Completion Report on the ADB Sanitation, Public Health and Environment Improvement (SAPHE) Project in March 2006 concluded that: *“There is still quite a lot of overlap in the regulatory duties of the different government departments, especially in the area of water, and there have been several instances where the departments could not agree to one common solution over the development of additional water resources.”* The life and death issues surrounding water cut across traditional government sectorial boundaries. They require a whole-of-government approach.

The advantages of a whole-of-government advisory committee on water are:

- Clear, mutually-agreed priorities and processes;
- Broadly-based well-considered advice to government on water and sanitation;
- Administration efficiency is improved because advice and proposals have been thoroughly discussed and vetted before they go to Cabinet;
- Increases understanding of the condition of the nation’s freshwater resources, water supplies and sanitation services through coordinated monitoring and assessment;
- Initiates, facilitates and improves planning for water supplies and sanitation services, particularly for designated growth centres;
- Identifies training and skills needs;
- Allows the GOK to speak with one informed voice on water and sanitation issues, improving community understanding and participation;
- Increases the opportunity for community participation in water and sanitation;
- Provides leadership and a single forum for interaction and information dissemination between agencies, NGOs and the community;
- Produces coordinated and thoroughly reviewed water and sanitation proposals for donor and investment organisations;
- Increases confidence in donor and investment organisations in the water sector;
- Increases international support for the water and sanitation sector;
- Is consistent with international and regional best-practice.

What would a National Water and Sanitation Committee do?

The following suggests a possible mission, principal aims, some of the functions and possible composition of a National Water and Sanitation Committee.

Mission

Safe water and sanitation for healthy communities, environments and economic growth

Aims

Consistent with the Water Sector Road Map developed under the ADB Technical Assistance Project *Promotion of Effective Water Management Policies and Practices*, the principle aims of the Committee are to:

1. *Raise the quality of life by improving the quality and availability of water.*
2. *Decrease infant mortality rates and illness due to water-borne diseases.*
3. *Coordinate information, policy development, planning, management of and training for the water and sanitation sectors throughout Kiribati, and*
4. *Provide technical and policy advice to the Government of Kiribati, the community, and non-government organisations on fresh groundwater protection, conservation and use and on water resource and sanitation planning, development and management.*

Functions

The Committee should co-ordinate the following functions:

- Prepare a Draft National Water and Sanitation Policy for submission to Cabinet;
- Review adequacy of existing legislation and regulations relating to the water and sanitation;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of Government agencies in the water and sanitation sector;
- Review and advise on training and communication needs;
- Prepare water quality standards and guidelines and relevant building codes;
- Undertake a national assessment of the quality and quantity of fresh groundwater resources and the potential for rainwater harvesting.
- Plan for the development of water and sanitation services and for the nationwide protection, conservation and sustainable use of fresh water, with special emphasise on designated growth centres;
- Undertake risk assessment of the water and sanitation in relation to global change;
- Foster community participation in water and sanitation sector based on reliable information;
- Advise Government, donors and non-government organisations on water resource issues.

Who Should Contribute to the Committee?

Who should convene the committee?

Because of the strategic importance of water and sanitation, it is proposed that the Committee should be coordinated and convened by the Office of the President (OB), with secretarial support from the Ministry of Public Works and Utilities. The OB would report on advice by and activities of the Committee to Cabinet.

Who should be members of the committee?

Agencies with significant responsibilities in water and sanitation:

Public Works Department and Public Utilities Board, Ministry of Public Works and Utilities (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

Important **NGO's** with broad interests in water at the village level are:

Kiribati Women Federation (AMAK)

KANGO (The Kiribati Association of NGOs)

Support for a National Committee is already in the budget of the WHO Kiribati Office.

What about sub-committees?

It is clear that the work of the proposed National Water and Sanitation Committee will cover a wide range of water-related issues and sectors. It appears it may be useful if strategies are carried out by a range of sub-committees which report on completed tasks to the Committee for review. Some possible committees are suggested in the following:

Water Resources & Risk Assessment (including global change)

MPWU, Met Office MELAD, MHMS, MEYSD

Water, Sanitation & Health

MHMS, PUB, PWD, MISA, KANGO, AMAK

Water and Sustainable Environments

MELAD, MPWU, MFEP, KANGO, AMAK

Water and Outer Island Development

MISA, MPWU, MELAD, MLPD, MFEP, KANGO, AMAK

South Tarawa Water & Sanitation

PUB, MPWU, MELAD, MFEP, Met Office, MHMS. KANGO, AMAK

Water and Agricultural Production,

MELAD, MISA, MFEP, KANGO, AMAK

Water & Sanitation Education, Public Participation and Training

MEYSD, MISA, MWU, KANGO, AMAK

Water Legislation & Pricing,

Attorney Generals, OB, MFEP, PUB, MPWU, KANGO. AMAK

Water Policy and National Water and Sanitation Plan

The Whole Committee

Relation to other National Committees?

The *National Adaptation Steering Committee (NASC)* was formed in 2004 and reports to the Office of the President. This Committee has agency members from MFED, MELAD, MISA, MPWU, MFMRD, and MHMS and community members from the National Council of Churches, the Chamber of Commerce (representing the private sector) and a representative from the Women's Committee (AMAK). A technical advisory sub-committee, the *Climate Change Study Team (CCST)*, reports to NASC. There is clearly overlap between the NASC and the NWSC although the latter has some different members.

The Outer Island Project Coordination Committee (OIPCC) is a whole-of-government committee set up under MISRA to coordinate outer island development projects. There is considerable membership overlap between NASC, OIPCC and the proposed NWSC. This overlap will provide strong linkage between water and sanitation planning, outer island development and adaptation planning and may suggest some administrative efficiencies may be possible,

Proposed Structure for the National Water and Sanitation Committee

