

# AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



## The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative

An initiative of the African Development Bank  
for building a partnership for poverty reduction in Africa

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Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Three weeks ago, African ministers of finance and African ministers of water, along with representatives of donor countries and multilateral and bilateral institutions met in Paris, at the invitation of the French government to agree on a common framework for attaining the millennium development goals in water, especially for rural Africa, where the majority of the populations live.

In recognition that the scope of the needs, in water supply and sanitation, is far greater than what individual countries and individual donors can do, the African Development Bank (AfDB), in close consultation with its regional member countries developed the rural water supply and sanitation initiative (RWSSI). The Declaration on RWSSI, adopted at the Paris conference, hinges on the willingness of all partners to work within a single framework. For the countries, it implies putting water and sanitation in the PRSPs and the national development plans as well as in national budgets. For the donor community, it requires putting into practice alignment of priorities, harmonization of practices and managing for results. RWSSI relies on the collective accountability of African ministers of water through AMCOW and operates within the global thrust of the NEPAD.

RWSSI is an ambitious initiative, which calls for a mobilization of 14.2 billion US \$ over a period of 11 years (2005 - 2015) in rural Africa for water and sanitation. This may be perceived to be a huge investment, but as rightly pointed out in Paris, the cost of not tackling the issue of water supply and sanitation in terms of associated diseases is estimated at 20 billion US \$ a year. The international community would, therefore, need to find more than 200 billion US \$ for health care only for the same period, not to mention the productivity loss for women and the dropout of girls from school. The simple mathematics, common sense and economics dictate that action be taken.

As we all know, Africa is a continent of paradoxes. It has abundant water resources (about 5400 billion cubic meters per year), but is ranked last in access to water and sanitation.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to quickly run the numbers:

- Only 3% of available water resources in Africa is utilized.
- 62% of population is rural, yet access to water supply and sanitation services in rural areas is low:
  - About 53% of rural population has no access to safe drinking water
  - About 57% has no access to basic sanitation
- Currently 14 African countries suffer from chronic water shortage.
- If the trends continue, this number will reach 25 in 2025.

The implementation of RWSSI requires an equal share of the burden by all stakeholders:

1. *The AfDB*

Scale up its capacity to deliver RWSSI.  
Finance and implement RWSSI, including the establishment of "fast track" mechanisms.

- Play a coordination role and participate in government led coordination mechanisms at the country level to periodically review country programs.
2. *African countries*
- Include water and sanitation in PRSPs, national development plans and PRSPs.
  - Build capacity, including at community and local government levels, to implement large scale programs and to ensure good governance.
  - Ensure the effective participation of populations.
3. *Donors*
- Work together under the same framework and harmonize their approaches with a view to reducing transaction costs and reporting requirements for the regional member countries. This is a bit like "herding cats". If history is our guide, it would not appear to be a "natural behavior";
  - "Walk the talk" on ownership, alignment, harmonization, management for results and mutual accountability.

RWSSI advocates the utilization of wide range appropriate technologies. The choice of technologies depends on location, communities' affordability and willingness to pay. Option for RWSSI include (but not limited to):

- For Water
  - Improved shallow wells & boreholes fitted with hand pumps
  - Spring development & rain water harvesting
  - Simple pipe systems with standpipes & house connections
- For sanitation
  - Improved pit latrines for households
  - Multiple-pit ventilated improved pit latrines
  - Sand-plate latrine
  - Small-bore sewers & simplified sewerage

The sustainability of the technologies relies on the development of maintenance culture.

The implementation of RWSSI is also based on:

- Demand driven programmatic approach
- Multi-pronged mechanisms and lending instruments
- User participation in the design and implementation
- Maintenance of infrastructure by local communities

Recognizing that not all African countries have the capacities to immediately implement RWSSI, the activities are sequenced for implementation, over a period of 11 years. As well, countries are grouped according to their readiness for investment intervention taking into account the policy environment, the institutional capacity, access to water supply and sanitation and ongoing programs.

To enhance accountability during implementation, it is important to ensure that proper monitoring mechanisms are in place and baseline indicators are developed. RWSSI will endeavor to produce annual reports and to feed data into existing reporting mechanisms, in particular the UN-ECA African Water Development Report and the World Water Assessment Program. RWSSI will also contribute to the Joint Monitoring Program led by UNICEF.

Let me reassure you all that the AWF and RWSSI complement each other fully. As the initiative led by the African Ministers of Water, the AWF hosted by the Bank, focuses on improving the enabling environment for RWSSI to fund projects and programs. The AWF provides resources for pilot, innovative approaches and technologies that RWSSI can fund at a larger scale. As such, the AWF support front end facilitation activities and ensures that poverty, gender and environmental concerns are fully reflected in WSS programs.

Let me conclude by stressing the continued commitment of the AfDB to contribute to poverty reduction in its regional member countries. This commitment justifies the decision of its ADF Board of Governors to accept that up to 30% of the financial requirement of RWSSI be supported by the ADF. By scaling up its rural water programs to 460 millions US\$ per year, the AfDB would become the single biggest donor on rural water supply and sanitation in Africa. The World Bank will be scaling up its programmes and France and The Netherlands have already pledged resources for RWSSI. While, we are looking forward for other countries to provide resources, we are actively starting to implement the RWSSI.

By equally supporting the burden of financing RWSSI, we will equally be rewarded by the achievements of RWSSI and the progress made in poverty reduction in Africa.

Thank you