

agency news

UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program

The UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program is an international partnership that operates globally to help poor people gain sustained access to improved water and sanitation services. With the help of partners in governments, donor agencies, the private sector, and NGOs, the Program engages in activities at local, national, regional and international levels.

The Program, which advocates a demand-based approach towards service provision and focuses on building capacity at all levels by supporting sustainable investments, strengthening sector policies, and learning and communicating lessons, is organized into five regional teams in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The regional teams are supported by staff based at the World Bank offices in Washington. Financing comes from bilateral donor agencies, UNDP, the World Bank and from the countries themselves.

The Program is currently working in several new areas. A global study evaluating the impact of gender and participation on sustainability has been undertaken, drawing upon projects in 14 countries. Another study on the role of small-scale entrepreneurs will, through case studies and workshops, assess how these entrepreneurs can play a larger role in providing services to the poor.

For more information on the Program and its activities, visit the website: www.wsp.org, which provides information and documents in English, French, and Spanish.

Conference call

'Our vision is of an Africa in which all citizens have access to safe and affordable water and sanitation services in the shortest possible time', so says the Africa Statement, one of three landmark documents emerging from the first Africa Consultative Forum on Water Supply and Sanitation, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 17-20 November 1998. The gathering of 134 experts from 27 African countries and many external support agencies assessed

an Africa Sector Review developed by a team of African specialists. In response to the depressing toll of death and disease caused by lack of basic water and sanitation services revealed in the review, the participants committed themselves to promote and implement an Action Programme and to establish a permanent secretariat for the Africa Chapter of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), '... to coordinate the urgent actions needed to bring the vision to reality.'

The Africa Chapter, which will be called WASAI (Water and Sanitation Africa Initiative), will be housed in an international institution where it will benefit from the host agency's administrative and communication facilities, but operate independently. WASAI will seek to stimulate sharing of best practices, will advocate that greater priority be given to water and sanitation programmes, and will help to build partnerships among the many stakeholders active in the sector (public and private sector, NGOs, community-based organizations, etc). A biennial Pan-African Forum will assess progress towards the goals and establish a work programme for the following two years.

A Core Group has been charged with bringing the permanent Secretariat into being by June 1999. In the meantime, tasks assigned to WASAI in Abidjan will be implemented by the existing Africa Working Group of the WSSCC, coordinated by Mrs Ebele Okeke from the Nigerian Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development. Donor finance of about \$300 000 per year is being sought for the operations of WASAI, and the WSSCC is launching an immediate appeal for \$100 000 to fund the first six months' activities, until the Chapter is established and has the credibility and audit procedures to raise donor support for itself.

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United Nations

The process to develop a Long-term Vision on Water, Life and the Environment in the 21st Century was officially launched on 24 November 1998 in The Hague. The World Water Vision will be presented at the Second World Water Forum: From Vision to Action, which will be organized together with an international ministerial conference 16-22 March 1999, in the Netherlands. The Dutch Government gives high priority to integrated water management and is the major sponsor of the Vision development. The process is being co-sponsored by the chief officers of 8 UN agencies — FAO, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, WMO, WHO and the World Bank.

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