



Kampala, September 10th 2012

A JOINT CSO STATEMENT ON THE RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION AS KEY PILLARS TO THE REALISATION OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

We, the undersigned civil society organisations appreciate the efforts of government to advance the human rights to water and sanitation in Uganda through the elaboration of many legal frameworks including, inter alia, the Constitution of Republic of Uganda (1995)(esp. articles 39 and 189), The Water Act Cap 15 and its associated Water Resources regulations, the National Environmental Act, the ratification of the Convention in the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, would like to bring the following to your attention.

Having analysed the progress on the realisation of the rights to water and sanitation in Uganda we would like to highlight the fact that as of June 2011, approximately 23,000 Ugandans including 19,700 children under five years of age die each year from diarrhoea of which 90% is directly attributed to poor water, sanitation and hygiene. Rural access to safe water has stagnated at 65% while in the urban areas access has declined from 67% to 66%. According to World Bank research, in Uganda, 389 Billion Shillings are lost every year to the costs of treatment of hygiene and sanitation related diseases. Also, pupil latrine access ratios has declined from 54 to 66 in the same period. These examples serve to highlight the fact that efforts to realise the human rights to water and sanitation need to be revitalised.

We realise that the main gaps between policy and implementation are currently caused by the fact that many of the international commitments have not resulted in the explicit recognition of the rights to water and sanitation in Ugandan law, policy and programming. In addition, prioritising water and sanitation to meet basic needs, production and also targeting the water and sanitation needs of vulnerable communities is still inadequate. Further, the resources and capacity of local government are currently insufficient. The protection of citizens from the adverse effects of encroachment on and pollution of catchment areas is becoming an urgent necessity.

We recommend the following:

1. The development and implementation of a National Action Plan to ensure universal access to water and sanitation and protection of the rights of the vulnerable communities;
2. The integration of sector policies, adopting a harmonised approach to the realisation of the rights to water and sanitation under the leadership of a single line agency;
3. The reduction or removal of those water tariffs preventing affordable domestic consumption of safe water for consumption and hygiene;
4. The development of standards on what is considered to be sufficient, accessible, affordable, culturally appropriate water as well as on water quality;
5. A separate budget line devoting at least 1% of GDP exclusively to safe water and basic sanitation for all with particular focus on those who have not been served;

6. The engagement by government and other key stakeholders in awareness raising and capacity building for participatory and sustainable Integrated Water Resource Management, implementation of adaptation to climate change, rainwater harvesting and the reduction of losses;
7. The establishment of an independent source of information on WASH based on research, input from communities and CSOs and monitoring by Human Rights bodies.