



Ministry of Health and Medical Services

**THE SOLOMON ISLANDS
RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION
POLICY**

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Foreword

The Honorable Minister of Health and Medical Services

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Abbreviations and Equivalents

CBO	Community Based Organisation
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
HIS	Health Information System
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MME	Ministry of Mines and Energy
National Program	National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program
NGO	Non Government Organisation
O&M	Operation & Maintenance
PEHD	Provincial Environmental Health Division
RWSS	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
WASH	Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
WatSan	Water Supply and Sanitation

1 Introduction

The Division of Water Resources of the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) is responsible for the overall management and regulation of the water resources of the Solomon Islands. Its prime objective is to ensure water resources are properly investigated and used on a sustainable basis to cater for the needs of people and to sustain the environment.

The Ministry of Health and Medical services, Environmental Health Division, RWSS Unit is responsible for WatSan activities which, although not specifically referred to, are managed under the Environmental Health Act, 1980 and its subsidiary legislation (Section 5(1)), Order Delegating Functions, 1987. All matters failing to be administered by the Ministry under the Act are hereby delegated to the Honiara Town Council. In the subsidiary legislation, specific references are made regarding the good construction, operation and maintenance of urban WatSan services only.

This Solomon Islands National Rural WatSan Policy is the first national Policy Document supporting the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Unit of the Environmental Health Division, Ministry of Health and Medical Services of the Government of the Solomon Islands. The RWSS was developed to provide and improve the processes involved to increase access to safe water and sanitation facilities for rural communities, rural health clinics and, funds permitting, rural education facilities in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

Challenges being faced by the WatSan sector include: high population growth, limited land access, limited financial assistance, limited technical resources, low access to safe water, low coverage of sanitation infrastructure, low maintenance of installed schemes, lack of applied community funding for maintenance and operation, low sector co-ordination, lack of community education, preparedness and ownership and lack of standardized technical designs and minimum standards for supply infrastructure.

To improve the situation and address the challenges, this Rural WatSan Policy defines the responsibilities of the stakeholders within the sector and including the beneficiaries. An increase in productivity and quality of services by the sector will be initiated and underpinned by a more coordinated approach to water and sanitation infrastructure and hygiene education.

2 Background

2.1 Environmental Health Situation

Rural communities across the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands face adverse health problems caused by lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation. Many communities spend inordinate amounts of time accessing safe water for basic living and sanitation is often bush toilets or the open beach. With the population of the Solomon Islands increasing at the rate of approximately 2.3% per annum, further pressure will be placed on Provincial and National Government resources to provide water and sanitation infrastructure to rural villages that will also be facing increased health pressures through the lack of such facilities.

WatSan status figures¹ for the Solomon Islands indicate wide and relatively good coverage for water supply but sanitation coverage remains very low compared to progress internationally. However, it is considered likely that the below figures for the Solomon Islands may only reflect the installed capacity of WatSan infrastructure and do not provide an accurate figure of the operational status of facilities.

Table 1: WatSan Coverage – Solomon Islands and World Figures:

	Population	Water Supply	Sanitation
SI Rural	356,000	65%	18%
SI National Total/Av ² .	443,000	71%	34%
SI-HIES ³ (2005-06)		70%	31%
World JMP ⁴ (2008)		78%	62%

3 Policy statement and sector aims:

3.1 Policy statement:

3.1.1 Definition:

This document is the Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Policy, and shall be the instrument governing the development, coordination, management, monitoring, evaluation, implementation and review of the provision of rural water supply, sanitation and hygiene development activities in the Solomon Islands

3.1.2 Authority

The Authority for this policy is vested in the appropriate laws and regulations of the Solomon Islands, including:

- **The Environment Act, 1998;**
- **The Environmental Health Act, 1996;**
- **The River Waters Act, 1996**
- **The Order Delegating Functions, 1987 Section 5(1);**

3.1.3 Application

This policy applies to all organizations, be it government, funding agencies, national and international, non-governmental, faith-based, community based, and commercial, as well as individuals involved in the sector.

3.2 Overall sector policy aims:

Access to water and sanitation is a universal human right (UN Declaration July 2010). Water and sanitation can be directly linked to health, dignity, equality and safety, and sustainable environments, as well as being an economic investment.

¹ Figures quoted from "Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 Report", WHO whilst HIES (2005-06) figures quoted in MTDS are national averages.

² National totals and averages include urban areas.

³ Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)

⁴ "Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation - Special Focus on Sanitation", WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, 2008

In the national development context for a long term National Rural WatSan Policy, the following seven aims have been formulated:

1. To assist all rural communities in obtaining appropriate and safe WatSan facilities;
2. To increase the capacity of Government and civil society organizations to assist rural communities to obtain basic, safe WatSan facilities that the communities themselves can maintain;
3. To implement agreements on standardized community contribution values, whether in kind or in cash, throughout the Solomon Islands to ensure all communities contribute equal effort when in receipt of WatSan infrastructure;
4. To supplement the National Health Strategy by positively promoting better health practices, focusing on clean water, good hygiene, diarrhea control and proper human waste disposal;
5. To increase the capacity of the Government and civil society at the National and Provincial level to plan, design and construct high quality WatSan facilities and to maintain and repair WatSan equipment;
6. To increase and develop co-operation between all Government and Non-Government stakeholders involved in the delivery of safe WatSan facilities and to encourage, promote and develop sector alignment in technical design, health and hygiene promotion, community engagement and gender equity and including community self funded operation and maintenance principles; and
7. To encourage environmentally sustainable development of the water and sanitation services supported by information campaigns and continuous educational interventions at all levels.

The complexity of the situation requires the commitment and close cooperation of all stakeholders involved in the delivery of WatSan infrastructure and hygiene education to achieve these aims.

3.3 Specific sectoral aims:

In keeping with the above general overall policy statement the following WatSan sector aims are formulated:

1. *To provide environmentally sustainable, appropriate water supplies to all rural villagers of the Solomon Islands, in order to:*
 - Contribute to improved public health;
 - Improve the livelihoods of rural villagers;
 - Reduce the burden on women and children of collecting water;
 - Promote social development based on gender equity and disability;
 - Promote and support basic water needs;
 - Promote the conservation of water resources;
2. *To promote and provide environmentally sustainable, appropriate sanitation to all rural villagers in the Solomon Islands, in order to:*
 - Promote and contribute to improved health, dignity, equality and safety;
 - Ensure a hygienic environment;

- Promote conservation of water resources.

Special emphasis is placed on coordination by allocating adequate capital funds and making appropriate institutional arrangements to affect a rapid increase in sanitation infrastructure numbers.

The *conservation of water resources* is of paramount importance to water security. Increasing population pressure, logging and other activities are threatening water catchment areas in many places in the Solomon Islands with detrimental effects to the communities. The Division of Water Resources of the MME has adopted the 'ridge-to-reef' concept as a means to preserve and conserve water resources. The 'healthy island' and 'healthy village' concepts have been adopted by the MoH and include water resource protection. Special emphasis is placed on water security and water resource catchment protection in order to secure water availability for future (and current) generations.

The effects of *climate change* are related to water security and the sector needs to be flexible and be able to adapt to it. Revised community training components and technical standards, as well as prioritization of high risk and/or affected areas will be essential.

3.4 Sector strategy, plans and procedures

The National Rural WatSan policy and objectives should be seen as a National setting for the intentions of the Solomon Islands Government. Based on the policy and objectives the sector agencies responsible for WatSan will prepare:

1. The strategies which will set out how the policy should be implemented; and
2. The action plans which will quantify the strategies in terms of resources, utilization of manpower, time and costs. Such plans should follow the principles of integrated water resources planning and development.
3. Procedures and plans to underpin the implementation of this policy.

4 Responsibilities of stakeholders

Components of the National Program will be implemented at the community, provincial and national levels, with each having clearly defined responsibilities. Over time it is expected that national level support for provincial government will decrease as provincial government personnel gain experience and their capacity to implement WatSan programs independently grows stronger. The main functions and responsibilities at each level are:

4.1 Community

Communities shall be responsible for and shall undertake the following;

1. Plan, manage and maintain their WatSan facilities through the establishment of village committees dedicated to managing WatSan infrastructure;
2. Contribute to the WatSan infrastructure by the support of appropriate village labour and appropriate materials to assist during the construction of the infrastructure. Contributions in cash will not release the community of this responsibility;

3. Community applications for water and sanitation assistance to the National Program may only be forwarded to the RWSS through the PEHD and be endorsed by the respective Province and be in line with the National Program requirements; and
4. Communities shall be held responsible for the safe keeping of materials supplied by the National Program and delivered to village sites to undertake water and sanitation infrastructure. Materials remain the property of the National Program until project handover whereupon the community or associated committee holds both ownership and the responsibility for operation and maintenance of the system.

4.2 Provincial Environmental Health Divisions

PEHD shall be responsible for and shall undertake the following;

1. Ensure that the allocation and distribution of National Program community WatSan projects are spread equitably across their respective provinces and where possible vulnerable communities facing adverse health conditions should be given priority;
2. Assist communities in their province to design and plan their WatSan facilities and advise them on the community's responsibility to self finance the operation and maintenance of their water and sanitation infrastructure;
3. Ensure communities are well trained and educated with the objective of improved health and sanitation practices gained by the use of improved WatSan infrastructure;
4. Ensure communities are trained in basic maintenance of the water and sanitation infrastructure;
5. Prioritize communities by their willingness to contribute labour, materials and cash or in kind contribution to the WatSan infrastructure;
6. Ensure project designs are presented in the format as required by the RWSS including implementation and training budgets and prioritize projects in financial year format;
7. Plan annual works programs and, in consultation with the RWSS, coordinate and execute program works in line with the annual work program and within National Program budget and time constraints;
8. Be responsible for the overall management of materials supplied by the National Program for community WatSan infrastructure once in their respective Province;
9. Remit to the National Rural Water and Sanitation Unit all financial transactions undertaken with the use of National Program funds to execute the National Program and by the use of and in line with the financial procedures and instructions of the Government of Solomon Islands;
10. Undertake as their top priority the design, planning and execution of works associated with the National Program; and
11. Assist non-government stakeholders involved in the supply of WatSan infrastructure where resources allow and without detriment to the planning and execution of the National Program.
12. Draft Provincial Water and Sanitation Ordinances and review and endorse the ordinance.

4.3 Provincial Government

Respective Provincial Governments shall be responsible for and shall undertake the following;

1. The implementation of water and sanitation infrastructure to rural communities, health clinics, and schools. Where Provincial Government resources are not able to provide these services they will continue to be supported by the Environmental Health Division, RWSS through the Solomon Islands Government.
2. The Provincial Ministry of Health shall support the PEHD with Provincial revenue annual budget funding allocated to support the operation and logistics of the National Program implementation in their respective provinces;
3. Develop Sub Station infrastructure to support both personnel and the aims of the National Program in the delivery of WatSan services to rural communities;
4. Support the training and capacity building of Provincial WatSan personnel;
5. Ensure all vacant Provincial positions within the PEHD are filled with suitable personnel funded under the Provincial budget;

4.4 National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Unit

The RWSS shall be responsible for and shall undertake the following;

1. Coordination of the WASH sector through the WASH Stakeholder Group, a sector coordination committee consisting of all sector stakeholders, to ensure infrastructure is provided in a consistent, equitable, efficient and effective manner by all sector stakeholders;
2. Act as the secretariat for the WASH Stakeholder Group, and work toward the Ministerial acceptance of the committee;
3. Develop, maintain, update, and enforce technical design and construction standards for WatSan structures. This includes the technical standards developed in cooperation with the MEHD – Minimum Infrastructure Standards;
4. Develop, maintain, update and enforce community development training standard practices including but not limited to: hygiene awareness, hygiene messages, water security, water committee training, and basic technical skills. The training requirements for projects are set out in the '**Solomon Islands rural WASH Community Development Training Manual**'.
5. Coordinate with and advise the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development on appropriate water and sanitation infrastructure in schools. The development of such infrastructure by the RWSS shall be undertaken where funding is available and as needs dictate.
6. Ensure that the National Program works including, design, verification and implementation are undertaken as priority for both National and Provincial Units.
7. Plan and coordinate the National Program, mobilize national and international funding and support, monitor water resources and service coverage.
8. Ensure adequate and ongoing training for RWSS personnel to facilitate personal development to attain the efficient design, planning, management and execution of the National Program;

9. Ensure that PEHD by the provision of adequate financial resources, undertake the training and education of communities/clinics/schools as an integral part of water and sanitation projects and in line with the intent of this policy;
10. Coordinate with the PEHD on available funding, budgets, works programs and at all times lead the planning and execution of the National Program;
11. Ensure accurate records are kept of the National Program in financial year format for the purpose of reporting and recording;
12. Ensure all financial accounts/dealings are undertaken by the use of and in line with the financial procedures and instructions of the Government of Solomon Islands;
13. Make available its management, technical and information services to the National Disaster Management Office if advised by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in the event of a National Disaster.
14. Promote partnerships with non-government stakeholders for National Program implementation when financial year funding exceeds the capacity of the RWSS to execute works;
15. Implement those components of the National Program that exceed the capacity of provincial governments and support increased civil service organization and private-sector involvement in the construction and maintenance of WatSan services.
16. Provide guidance and support in reviewing Provincial water and sanitation ordinances as appropriate.
17. Pursue agreement with Provincial Governments for the implementation of a nationwide policy on community contribution values. These contributions may include in kind or in cash with the view to ensure all communities across the Solomon Islands are contributing equal effort in the delivery of WatSan infrastructure.

4.5 Aid Donors and Non-Government Stakeholders

Aid Donors or Aid Donor Programs, NGO's, CBO's and FBO's involved with the delivery of safe WASH development shall align themselves with the intent of this policy.

This category of stakeholder shall:

1. Pay particular attention to community engagement and the policy requirement for community based training in health, sanitation and hygiene awareness;
2. Pay particular attention to the policy requirement for community training and self financing for operation and maintenance costs;
3. Ensure compliance with minimum (technical and community development training) standards where standards are set;
4. At all times communicate with the RWSS of intentions to provide development in the sector and provide information regarding projects status;
5. Take into account the capacity limits of the National and Provincial Environmental Health Divisions to provide assistance to design, verification and/or implementation of Non-

Government projects and programs, as execution of the National Program is the priority of RWSS and PEHD;

6. Actively participate in the WASH Stakeholder Committee to contribute to sector development and coordination.

5 Financing WatSan programs

5.1 Financing rural water supply facilities

To ensure that substantial funds are available to implement the National rural water supply investment program, the National Government will take the lead in mobilizing domestic funds and external assistance for implementation of the program.

- The National Government, Environmental Health Division and RWSS will work to improve harmonization with other sector stakeholders involved in the delivery of WatSan in the Solomon Islands.
- Provincial Government shall financially support Provincial WatSan offices to assist with the management, planning and implementation of the National Program in their respective Provinces.
- Institutions in the main shall be responsible for financing of WatSan. However schools, clinics and health centers may be incorporated into agreements for funding through the National WatSan Program where management capabilities and funding mechanisms allow.
- All Non-Government stakeholders will coordinate with the RWSS on planned investment strategies and/or areas of investment concerning the WASH sector.

5.2 Self financing principles

Self financing of operation and maintenance for rural water supply systems will be the responsibility of individual recipient communities. Community ownership and community management of water supply systems will be adopted as the policy strategy of choice. Some basic principles shall be incorporated into a self financing village policy:

- An agreement between the community and the relevant authorities setting out mutual, accepted responsibilities and commitments shall be a prerequisite for government support, including community contributions either in cash or in kind and the prerequisite for the supply of village labour to assist installation;
- Self financing by the community for operation, maintenance and replacement costs shall as a general rule always apply, although there may be cases where a transparent assistance payment may be granted;
- If communities are not able to maintain or operate water supply systems on a sustainable basis, the services (material and labour) may be outsourced to capable individuals or groups as part of an agreement between the government, community and a technical support service provider. Such an arrangement is expected to improve the situation and contribute to improved service delivery although the community prerequisite to self finance still stands in an arrangement such as this;

- Because of the great variation in conditions and income levels in general throughout Solomon Islands, technology and affordability of services by the community, integrated with self financing, shall constitute a key principle and be adhered to when designing a water supply system; and
- Institutions, schools and health facilities receiving assistance for water supply systems will also be required to satisfy requirements for contribution and self funding of operation and maintenance costs in line with community requirements. Contribution levels may differ from community schemes, pending discussions between the facilities and the communities using the facility and provisions in the facilities' respective recurrent budgets.

5.3 Financing sanitation facilities

- The RWSS shall ensure households and villages have access to improved sanitation infrastructure by making available for purchase through PEHD, PVC/Fiberglass water seal inserts, risers, and riser moulds. The funds received from the sale of these items shall be used by Provincial Offices to ensure that adequate supplies of sanitation materials are available through their respective offices. By the return of some of the initial investment a partly self sustaining mechanism for the purchase of these materials shall be instigated.
- The financing strategy for community sanitation will be based on the premise that individual families may be responsible for a portion of the payment of the sanitation facilities and that contribution in kind will be required for the construction of the superstructure. This applies in the case of National Program community sanitation projects. The National Program may in certain community situations further subsidize the construction of sanitation infrastructure.
- In the case of individual requests for improved sanitation infrastructure the individual shall be required to meet a larger portion of the costs associated with materials and installation. The National and/or Provincial EHD offices shall provide advice on siting and construction where possible.
- The focus of the National Program will be generating demand for improved environmental sanitation and thus creating a self-sustaining market for widespread construction of latrines. The program will also promote *sanitation marketing* at national, provincial and community level to increase the distribution and use of toilets.
- Institutions in the main shall be responsible for financing of sanitation infrastructure schemes. However schools, clinics and health centers may be incorporated into agreements for funding through the National Program, where management capabilities and funding mechanisms allow. These institutions shall also be required to satisfy requirements for self funding of operation and maintenance cost and in line with community requirements with contributions either in cash or in kind and the prerequisite for the supply of labour to assist installation.
- Sanitation education and hygiene awareness programs shall be carried out through innovative approaches such as Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST), a combination, or other participatory hygiene approach. This approach also addresses equity.

6 Hygiene and sanitation awareness

6.1 General

Improving hygiene and sanitation practices is a long-term process requiring effective stakeholder partnerships and a commitment to adaptive learning. All stakeholders require a comprehensive understanding of successful approaches that have led to improved practices and health, with a particular analysis of local gender and cultural issues as they relate to behavior change. Gender equity should be encouraged with particular attention to the needs of women and children being addressed in both hygiene and sanitation awareness.

Messages developed through broad based national sanitation and hygiene campaigns are often confusing to the recipient. This policy encourages localizing the messages using input from the target audiences and ensuring that all messages are field tested. EHD working with the Health Promotion Unit in collaboration with stakeholders, sanitation marketing and hygiene awareness expertise shall provide the foundation for a strategic and innovative approach to community engagement that could be extended to other sanitation, hygiene and water supply interventions in the Solomon Islands. EHD in collaboration with the Health Promotion Unit shall encourage the sharing of lessons learned and successful programs with other stakeholders in the WASH sector through the WASH Stakeholder Committee.

6.2 Rural community water, hygiene and sanitation awareness

The Environmental Health Division in collaboration and coordination with the Department of Health Promotion will take the lead in the promotion of water, hygiene and sanitation awareness in stages before and during the introduction of improved WatSan infrastructure to communities. Water, hygiene and sanitation awareness undertaken shall include the following:

- Educate communities (men, women and children) and ensure all communities receive hygiene and sanitation awareness training in stages, before and during the introduction of improved WatSan infrastructure
- Educate communities in health and disease related problems caused by poor hygiene and lack of good sanitation practices;
- Educate the community on the aims of the National WASH Program to assist communities to improve health and hygiene through the supply of improved water and sanitation infrastructure;
- Educate communities in basic hygiene practices and the health benefits gained from these practices;
- Educate communities of their roles and responsibilities within the community regarding water, hygiene and good sanitation usage;
- Educate communities in water saving and conservation techniques;
- Educate communities and households in household water storage and treatment as a part of water security at household level;
- Educate communities in water security aspects;
- Educate communities in basic maintenance skills;

- All stakeholders involved in hygiene and sanitation awareness training will, in conjunction with the WASH Stakeholders Committee, be encouraged to develop, field test and standardize hygiene and sanitation education material/messages that are delivered to communities as a whole.

The training components are detailed in the *Solomon Islands rural WASH Community Development Training Manual*.

6.3 Schools hygiene and sanitation awareness

The National Government through the Environmental Health Division and Department of Health Promotion will take the lead in the promotion of hygiene and sanitation awareness and, as WatSan infrastructure in schools are improved, will work closely with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development with the formulation of schools curriculum hygiene and sanitation awareness support materials.

Education on water, hygiene and sanitation awareness undertaken in schools by the Environmental Health Division and Department of Health Promotion will follow the policy requirements of education for communities.

7 Technology

7.1 General

The RWSS shall work closely with other stakeholders involved in WatSan to develop, update and enforce technical design and construction standards for WatSan infrastructure. Standardized technology and standardized construction designs will enable implementing agencies to choose from a complete set of designs suitable for the situation being addressed. The technical standards are set out in the '*Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Design and Construction Standards*'. The document can be obtained at RWSS in electronic format.

7.2 Water supply systems

Preference shall be given to appropriate low technology solutions (ground well, rain catchment, gravity fed), requiring the minimal amount of maintenance and financial support from the community for the operation and maintenance of the water supply system.

High technology solutions (bore pumps, solar systems, windmills) should only be considered if the recipient community is made aware of, and has the financial capacity and management mechanisms in place, to support the maintenance of high technology water supply systems. Preference should be given to environmentally sustainable systems should a high technology solution be used.

Water supply infrastructure in schools shall be undertaken in line with Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Minimum Infrastructure Standards for water supply. These standards are included in the *Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Design and Construction Standards*.

All pipe-work fittings and material used in the construction of water supply schemes should be standard metric sizes to allow the sourcing of suitable maintenance parts from either local or international suppliers.

7.3 Sanitation facilities

The Solomon Islands has a very low coverage of rural households using a toilet (18%, 2009) and a rapid increase in the use of sanitation facilities is of paramount importance. Priority is given to systems that can easily be sustained by households at minimal cost and technical skills.

In general community latrines should be based on the following:

- *Dry Pit Latrine* – where access to sufficient water is limited and ground conditions dictate that dry technology can be used,
- *VIP* – Ventilated Improved Pit latrine where access to water is limited and ground conditions dictate that dry technology can be used,
- *Pour-Flush* – Pour Flush Water Seal Pit latrine where access to reliable, continuous, and sufficient adequate water for flushing is available and adverse environmental effects are avoided;
- *Septic systems* – the septic system includes both the toilet, septic tank as well as the means to dislodge the contents of the tank when full. Manual dislodging in rural settings should be avoided, especially as waste dump sites are not available. Septic tanks may only be used where dislodging facilities (septic trucks) are available and where adverse environmental effects are avoided;
- *Composting toilets* – Composting toilets are environmentally friendly but involve a significant behavior change regarding sanitation. This option should only be considered where the recipient is made aware of and has the understanding of management issues and has management mechanisms in place, to support this system.

Sanitation infrastructure shall be planned, designed and sited in close collaboration with the community and include full consideration of cultural, gender, disability, and environmental aspects. Particular attention shall be given to siting of sanitation facilities and within culturally appropriate borders. Communities shall be encouraged in the practice of using vegetation to screen around facilities both in close proximity and along access pathways. This practice provides privacy to both gender users of the facilities.

Sanitation infrastructure in schools shall be undertaken in line with Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Minimum Infrastructure Standards and in line with proper sanitation technology, cultural requirements and maintenance issues.

Selection and technical standards of sanitation facilities are detailed in the *Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Design and Construction Standards*.

8 Procurement, storage and distribution of supplies and materials

8.1 Procurement

The RWSS shall use approved Solomon Islands Government procurement procedures and financial instructions in purchasing materials for WatSan projects. For the annual National Program, open tenders shall be called using Government procurement procedures and encouragement of both local and international suppliers to bid for supply is the preference. This allows comparison of prices received and enables a considered assessment to be made on the supply process and selection of supplier.

8.2 Storage and Distribution

Storage and distribution of materials for the National Program will be controlled through the RWSS Headquarters and coordinated through the RWSS store at Ranadi, Honiara.

8.3 Construction

The RWSS shall take a more managerial/supervisory role across the sector and move towards technology transfer including the use of skilled sector partners including NGO's, CBO's, and FBO's in construction of schemes. This has several positive effects in that:

- The capacity of the RWSS and PEHD are not over stretched allowing more time for planning and community education;
- The use of partners increases the skills base of the country as a whole in the WatSan sector;
- Increased efficiency in construction may be achieved;

9 Operations and maintenance

9.1 General

RWSS and PEHD shall educate and train communities to raise their awareness and understanding of the requirement to manage their WatSan infrastructure. Community self financing for operation and maintenance costs shall be given high priority and be adopted as a prerequisite in community engagement practices and training.

It is recognized that several Provinces have Provincial Ordinances governing the operation and maintenance of community WatSan infrastructure and these set out community responsibilities. This Policy is directed at strengthening and supporting the Provincial Ordinances where they exist.

Operation and maintenance includes:

- Implementing agencies shall pay particular attention to, and encourage the community to use existing effective village based management/committee structures for ongoing financial and technical management of the water and sanitation infrastructure. This may be in the form of church group, women's group and/or village group.
- Implementing agencies shall at all times obtain written agreements from communities and/or their committees for operation and maintenance of WatSan systems and fully educate the concerned parties on financing operation requirements, maintenance requirements and parts sourcing. This is considered an integral part of this policy and requires increased resources from all stakeholders in the WatSan sector to change the current lack of maintenance practices by communities.
- Gender equity shall be supported and encouraged by training and implementing agencies. The role of women in the decision making process, management, operation and maintenance should be encouraged and developed as water and sanitation infrastructure often has the most positive impact upon the lives of women and children.
- Designated community members shall be trained on installation, operation and maintenance of the WatSan infrastructure during construction.
- The National Program, in project budgeting shall include the financial cost for a basic tool kit. This tool kit shall become the property of the community committee to enable corrective maintenance to be undertaken on the WatSan infrastructure by the community members.

9.2 Responsibility for Operation and Maintenance

The responsibility for minor⁵ and major⁶ operation and maintenance of WatSan lies with the community and Provincial Government respectively. This also applies to institutions, schools and health clinics.

9.3 Purchase and distribution of supplies and materials for repairs

The Provincial WatSan branches must work with communities to access the parts and fittings required to keep their rural water supply systems operational and safe.

The National RWSS Unit may need to assist in the initial stages by providing some assistance for the procurement and storage of high turnover parts and fittings. At the earliest possible stage, the National RWSS shall encourage the PEHD to invest in operations supporting the operation and maintenance of WatSan systems.

Correct inventory and financial records shall be kept by RWSS Provincial and Head Office stores for all transactions undertaken for the purchase of maintenance materials. Materials allocated to the WatSan Program shall not be available for purchase as maintenance materials.

10 Human resources development

The increased demand for WatSan infrastructure places increased pressure on available RWSSs human resources. The RWSS shall initiate up-skilling of current and future National and Provincial staff at all levels to facilitate improved engineering design, program management, planning and execution of the National Program.

The National Government recognizes the importance of improved WASH to the health and well being of Solomon Islanders and support the EHD/RWSS to increase the number of positions for personnel employed under the National and Provincial Units.

Human resource development is a crucial element in the assumption of responsibilities and in the implementation of the WatSan Policy. The development of adequate extension services for WatSan, covering the entire range from community management skills through technical training to health and hygiene education, is necessary for the WatSan sector policy to succeed.

Shared learning between stakeholders and updating each other on new approaches and technologies is of great importance and is one of the core purposes of the WASH Stakeholder Group.

The shift to greater responsibilities for the communities with Government acting as a facilitator will require a concerted human resources development effort. While most of the financing will go towards capital expenditures for new rural water supply facilities, increased funds will be required and increased effort will go towards training and management initiatives in both Government and community sectors.

As part of this policy all Government and non-government stakeholders will prioritize training for community hygiene and sanitation awareness and community based self financing for operation and maintenance.

⁵ Minor includes: tap (stand) repair/replacement, leakage repair, guttering replacement, etc.

⁶ Major includes: tank collapse, intake box replacement etc.

11 Project process

To ensure efficient and effective delivery of WASH projects, the project procedure will be standardized across the sector⁷. This procedure will include the appropriate order of the various activities to ensure maximum effectiveness as well as who is responsible for the respective activities to ensure maximum efficiency, taking into account community participation.

While community participation is essential in the project process to maximize the ownership and appropriateness of the scheme, it should not be to the extent at which the process is so hampered to become inefficient. For example: while procurement done by the recipient community may be a useful as a skill to have, the reality of very difficult infrastructure and poor access to goods and services by most rural communities will make project process extremely slow. In the interest of efficiency, such a task is better left to those organizations with good access.

RWSS with the sector stakeholder will establish and update the project procedure, which can be found in the *Solomon Islands rural WASH Community Development Training Manual*.

12 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will be essential to assess project and program progress and success, and to improve on the sector's performance. M&E activities and reporting should include:

- Project identification, survey and design;
- Procurement of Materials, logistics, freight and personnel availability to Project;
- Construction progress and quality;
- Community development training (preparation, water security, climate change, hygiene, water committee, basic plumbing etc.);
- Maintenance issues, with special attention to self financing of O&M, and the state of the infrastructure during its design life;
- Actual cost of Project against RWSS budget including per capita cost;
- Community participation against agreed inputs;
- Long term community behavioral change;
- Sanitation coverage;

EHD/RWSS shall develop and implement an effective and sustainable M&E approach and program which includes projects under the National Program as well as the sectors' stakeholders' projects.

Ways to effectively monitor water quality will be investigated. Currently a monitoring scheme is in place for Honiara. Lack of resources, challenging infrastructure and other issues make water quality monitoring of rural water resources difficult.

⁷ Individuals or individual communities that do WatSan projects without external help are excluded from this.

13 Information management

Current available information regarding the location and operational status of WatSan schemes requires updating but is essential for M&E purposes. Information on the activities being undertaken across the sector by all stakeholders is also contradictory and requires better co-operation across all stakeholders. To improve this situation the RWSS shall in conjunction with the MHMS, National Health Information System (HIS) and the sector stakeholders, develop and maintain a RWSS database.

The current HIS format (since 2008) gathers information from each health facility in the Solomon Islands but does not include data per community. The HIS records information relevant to the WASH sector, including: occurrences of diarrhea, eye infections, skin diseases, healthy island/healthy village activities, village health committees and other health promotion activities.

As previous attempts at maintaining a database proved to be unsustainable as the chosen technology was too complicated, the RWSS database will record data of all stakeholders' projects in a basic format (spreadsheet or common database) to allow management and access to it by all users.

To assist the sector in gathering and maintaining information, reporting requirements will be set, including:

- Quarterly update on completed ongoing and planned projects in the required format;
- Standard reporting formats including *survey & design report* (which includes the standard survey form), *project completion report*;
- *Project Proposal*, to be forwarded to the RWSS Headquarters once a WatSan project has been costed and accepted for funding. This will allow statistical gathering for planning in the WASH sector;
- The *project completion report* is to be forwarded to the RWSS Headquarters on project completion and including actual scheme costs, infrastructure built, location, funding agency and implementation agency among others. This form will allow gathering of information on a financial year basis and allow the tracking of trends in the sector. The Ministry of National Planning and Development Co-ordination may also benefit from inclusion as a recipient of this information.

The RWSS shall assess the capability of using existing MHMS institutions to gather information on existing WatSan schemes and their operational status. Gathering and inclusion of this information in a central database will give a better picture of overall WatSan in the Solomon Islands.