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MANUAL ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

Lead Author: Robert Bos

*Contributing Authors: David Alves, Carolina Latorre, Neil Macleod,
G rard Payen, Virginia Roaf & Michael Rouse*

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 Alliance House
 12 Caxton Street
 London SW1H 0QS, UK
Telephone: +44 (0)207 7654 5500
Fax: +44 (0)207 7654 5555
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Locals collecting water from a pump in a community in Limpopo close to the Zimbabwe border in South Africa (2007) © Robert Bos, IWA

Chapter 6 The human rights to water and sanitation in the essential functions of service providers and regulators

SYNOPSIS

This chapter reviews eight essential functions of water and sanitation service providers in detail, identifying options for the incorporation of HRWS actions. Water and sanitation master plans and investment plans are robust tools to introduce HRWS principles. In particular, they offer opportunities for utilities to cooperate with banks and other investors. Planning is key to successful progressive realisation. Legal support should address HRWS in contractual arrangements, and legal departments will have to deal with compliance issues as well as to liaise with the human rights community. Analysis of budget and financial flows will allow optimisation of resource allocations to the HRWS. Similarly, a review of materials and technologies in use will help put operation and maintenance in a human rights mode. Monitoring by utilities will have to be reconciled with other monitoring activities in the national context, highlighting human rights indicators. Customer-oriented management should focus on user-friendly complaints mechanisms, and communications to customers should clarify their position as rights holders. Human resources management plays a critical role in the development of corporate capacity in HRWS across the utility.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Drinking water service providers are tasked with the extraction of source water, the treatment of that source water to drinking water quality standards, and storage and distribution of drinking water to customers while safeguarding quality standards. Sanitation service providers are tasked with the collection of human waste through sewerage systems or through the servicing of on-site sanitation facilities, the treatment of human waste and its safe disposal. Whatever their model, utilities have to perform several essential functions to comply with the task of providing water supply and sanitation services within established boundaries, over an agreed period of time and in accordance with agreed performance indicators. These essential functions are listed below and for each of them, the options and opportunities to include HRWS criteria and principles will be discussed.

- Planning and management.
- Legal support.
- Budget, finance and accounts.
- Operation and maintenance.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

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- Customer services.
- Communications.
- Human resources management.

6.2 PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

The adjustments to corporate policies and strategies, referred to in the previous chapters, to accommodate the requirements of the HRWS should focus on several issues that will guide the various departments within the organisation in pursuing their individual HRWS targets.

Thus far, most formal service providers and management boards have remained largely unaffected by the changing policy landscape in response to the need to address progressive realisation. In practice, they already contribute significantly, but the HRWS components of policy and regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements and operational approaches will need to be developed in a systematic way.

In several countries, NGOs directly or indirectly involved in drinking water, sanitation and wastewater management services have started employing rights-based standards and monitoring the impacts of advocacy efforts. This has led to a consolidation of efforts to hold duty bearers accountable for their obligations. The management of utilities will benefit from liaising with these NGOs because it is a first opportunity to adopt and apply lessons learned, and it allows the harmonisation of actions and the testing of proposed approaches against the realities of running a utility.

The UN resolutions recognising the HRWS have galvanised civil society efforts, so that NGOs are now increasingly seen as integral to the process of progressive realisation. The role of NGOs in training and education of the rights holders on the principles of the HRWS is another good reason for service providers to liaise with them.

In many low- and middle-income countries, a similar liaison of service providers with representatives of external support agencies may be fruitful as well. Many bilateral agencies for international cooperation now have their operations decentralised to the level of recipient countries, through the embassies of their respective countries. Their country-specific aid policies emphasise sector-wide approaches within which drinking water/sanitation and human rights issues fit well together—efforts to strengthen and expand services with a human rights focus are therefore likely to successfully make an appeal to their support.

For those service providers operating under a concession, contract or license, it is important to plan for a strengthening of their negotiating skills in the area of HRWS. On the one hand, public utilities will want to use the HRWS arguments to argue for specific funding or for the approval of funding mechanisms that support action specific to the full realisation of the HRWS; on the other hand, utilities will want to bring to the negotiating table the evidence-based arguments and insights to limit HRWS goals and objectives to what realistically can be achieved.

Planning and management revolves around translating results of assessment and monitoring of developments and trends into medium- and long-term targets for coverage, water quality, service levels, cost-recovery, and operation & maintenance, as well as preparedness for emergency situations. The human-rights-based approach now introduces the new principles of equality and non-discrimination as well as the need to view conventional issues such as quality, service levels and affordability through a human rights lens. The development of different scenarios will allow maximisation of resources (both financial and human resources) in support of attaining HRWS objectives.

There is an important opportunity to include HRWS criteria and principles into masterplans and investment plans for drinking water and sanitation service expansion. Master and investment plans are robust tools to take the HRWS into consideration and select optimal alternatives, especially in developing countries with scarce resources. Multilateral development banks have a key role to play in this respect. In Bolivia, for example, municipalities and other local governments increasingly work in the context of

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master plans: studies to plan future investments are carried out with international support, principally from the Inter-American Development Bank¹². Such studies and the resulting masterplans must include a focus on vulnerable people and marginalised communities, including attention for settlements that are considered illegal.

To ensure an effective and sustained human rights input into all these planning and management functions, it is recommended that large utilities appoint a dedicated human rights professional to their management team. Small to medium-sized utilities may want to co-opt the services of a human rights professional on an *ad hoc* or periodic basis, or add human rights responsibilities to the post descriptions of members of the existing management team.

The Handbook “Realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation” by the former UN Special Rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque covers the integration of the HRWS into planning processes comprehensively and distinguishes the following steps: assessment and analysis, setting targets and developing plans of action, allocating roles and responsibilities to different actors, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The present IWA Manual covers the first two steps under planning and management in this section (confined to the utility context, the broader clarification of roles and responsibilities at the national level is addressed in Chapter 4), and operation and maintenance, and monitoring and evaluation in sections that follow.

Planning for actions in support of progressive realisation of the human rights by utilities and other providers is not done in isolation; it will have to be done in tune with the national coordination entity discussed in Chapter 4.

Service providers will have information concerning existing infrastructure and connections, total water production and non-revenue water, frequency and location of leaks and bursts, the metering system and their customer base. This information will need updating to make it relevant from the human rights perspective: within the service area individual households and communities without access will need to be counted and mapped, and an assessment will need to be made of the obstacles preventing their incorporation into the network (e.g. unaffordable connection costs, land tenure issues, level of acceptability of piped water as a convenience commodity).

Based on the situation analysis corporate policy and operational initiatives need to be formulated and linked to specific human rights targets.

Many utilities have already in place a pro-poor policy, which sets decision-making criteria for outreach to underprivileged, marginalised and poor communities. The wording of such policies may need to be reviewed so it is clear that they are not about charity but about complying with human rights. Their implementation will rely either on subsidies or on the engagement of the communities to contribute to service extension in kind.

Planning and operating procedures, such as the pre-feasibility and feasibility studies for new infrastructure development, will need to take human rights criteria into account—and these should therefore be explicitly included in the terms of reference for such studies. Utilities also will have to participate in the planning of development projects that may affect their services, for example energy or agriculture projects in the watershed where their source water comes from, and they have to ensure that the HRWS of their customers are not adversely affected by such developments. This means that representatives of the utility must insist on a HRWS component to be included in the environmental/health/social impact assessments of such projects.

In some countries situations exist where a large urban utility lacks the mandate to service households in surrounding peri-urban communities, whether formal or informal, because these do not fall under the

¹²Claudia Vargas, independent consultant in water and sanitation, Bolivia; personal communication.

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municipality's jurisdiction. While the utility cannot provide services to these communities, it can provide technical assistance to community or NGO initiatives for small community water supplies. The assistance can go beyond strict technical issues and become a vehicle for the promotion of the HRWS. This is a management issue that requires timely planning and effective decision-making.

Preparedness for emergency situations – either “internal”, such as the catastrophic failure of a dam, source pollution, the burst of a distribution mains or the breakdown of a treatment plant, or “external” owing to a natural disaster, such as a flood, landslide, hurricane, earthquake, volcanic eruption or tsunami, or because of civil strife or war – is essential for any service provider. Risk profiles will indicate where to focus preparedness and resilience measures. Such preparedness plans now also need to take into account the impacts of emergency situations on inequality and on discrimination and the need to extend the scope of emergency responses with a HRWS component. In a state of emergency, the most vulnerable are usually the hardest hit, also when it comes to drinking water supply and sanitation services, and specific interventions will be needed to prevent the impact on these groups from being exacerbated.

6.3 LEGAL SUPPORT

Formal service providers will have a legal advisor or even a legal department; smaller ones may have to rely on the services of a legal firm. The core legal functions will relate to contractual agreements: the contracts with customers (water-users), the contracts with suppliers, contractual institutional arrangements, and the contractual agreements with national or local government authorities granting the provider the right and the duty to undertake drinking water supply and/or sanitation service delivery. This last function is addressed in the previous chapter.

Contractual agreements have to comply with the legislation in the country where the utility operates, and they will need to be adapted when relevant laws change. Compliance with contractual agreements will need to be monitored, and the legal department/advisor will have to take action in cases where customers/suppliers do not comply, and prepare a proper response in case the service provider itself is accused of non-compliance with its legal obligations.

The principles of the HRWS will have their bearing on a utility's legal practices. In a considerable number of cases this will focus on customer contracts, in particular the conditions for being connected to public networks and late or non-payment of bills for water and sanitation services. *In extremis*, the conventional response to substantial payment arrears has been to disconnect the non-complying customer from these services (in countries where the law permits such action). The recognition of the HRWS has a bearing on the provider's response options and legal departments/advisors of utilities will have to design procedures that comply with human rights principles. This issue is addressed in Chapter 7.

There are other compliance issues that may need to be seen in a new light. Actions by customers that jeopardise or interfere with the enjoyment of the rights by other customers will also need to be addressed through legal action. A common example, in situations where piped water supply services are unreliable, or where they are provided only periodically (like twice a week) – in themselves of course conditions that do not meet human rights criteria – is the acquisition by some customers of a pump to rapidly fill their rooftop tank or other domestic reservoir the moment water is available. This creates negative pressure in the system, hampering delivery to customers without such a device and enhancing the risk of pipe collapses and contamination (and thereby affecting the key human rights criterion of water quality).

(Sub)-contracts with suppliers need similar oversight—the products and services supplied must not only meet the contractual specifications and requirements to the letter, but they should also constitute the best options from a human rights perspective, in other words: there should be a tangible effort by suppliers

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to positively affect equality and non-discrimination. This can come to expression in design, cost, durability and other characteristics (see also sub-section 6.4).

Actions by third parties adversely affecting a utility's capacity to deliver drinking water services (as contractually agreed and in line with HRWS principles) also need a response from the legal department/advisor. For example, pollution of source water by industry, by agriculture or by individuals calls for litigation.

A new essential function for legal departments/advisors is that of liaising with the national authorities on human rights issues, based in ministries of justice or ministries of foreign affairs (see Chapter 4). This liaison should ensure the proper translation of the criteria and principles of international law, as reflected in national policies, laws and regulations, into the legal practices of service providers. It should also ensure that relevant information from providers contributes to a realistic process of national legislation. It is critical, particularly for larger providers and for trans-national companies delivering drinking water supply and sanitation services, to stay informed about and document the jurisprudence around the world as it evolves in relation to the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

More than the technical criteria imposed by the HRWS on service provision, the human rights principles will need to be translated by the legal department/advisor into good practice guidance for the organisation: there may have to be sharpened rules for accountability both within the organisation and towards the outside world, the need for transparency and information sharing will need to be translated into rules for communications, participatory approaches in provider/customer relations need promoting and sustainability criteria will have to be inserted where they are lacking. The issue of corruption deserves special attention in this connection. Any distortion of normal service delivery because bribes or other favours are accepted by staff will be detrimental to the pursuit of human rights objectives and will need to be countered by severe sanctions.

Most importantly, the spirit of the HRWS has to be reflected by continuous efforts to reduce inequality and discrimination within the customer base served as well as, internally, in the human resources policies and practices of the company.

6.4 BUDGET, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS

The internal structure and procedures supporting the budget, finance and accounts activities of a drinking water supply and/or sanitation provider may vary according to the organisational model. All utilities will focus on cost-recovery for operation, for asset management and maintenance, and for the extension of services. Private utilities will focus, in addition, on maintaining a profit margin securing attractive returns for investors and eliciting further investments. The State, as the duty bearer responsible for realising the HRWS, has to ensure that operational, investment and financial costs, as well as profit margins remain within reasonable limits while efficiency is maximised, so that on the one hand much-needed investment in water and sanitation infrastructure and services is secured, while on the other hand resources allocated to reduce and eliminate inequality and discrimination are maximised and HRWS criteria are met. In its oversight function, the responsible public authority has to ensure the planned investments are effectively carried out, while water prices are maintained at affordable levels.

The financial flows into and out of utilities need to be analysed to identify options and opportunities to better contribute to the progressive realisation of the HRWS, as well as the obstacles to and constraints on achieving this objective.

First, a review of the current situation should result in proposals for the re-allocation of existing funds to optimise support for HRWS-associated activities. In other words, a first effort should focus on structural changes in budget and finance at no extra cost.

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Next, the ideas for specific additional HRWS actions coming from departments or individuals within the organisation (addressing among other issues: operations, maintenance, communications and monitoring) will have to be reviewed by management, checked against new policy and strategic frameworks, prioritised and budgeted for. Small and medium-sized providers may explore how cooperation in carrying out some of these ideas can lead to economies of scale. The need for additional human resources with specific HRWS tasks has to be translated into budget-lines as well.

Government support may be sought for some of the additional costs, but for other items the new expenditures will have to be matched with new income. In this context, options for cross-subsidisation from income out of higher service levels to cover the cost of connecting or otherwise servicing the vulnerable and marginalised communities and households need to be explored. Such changes in financial flows need to be fully transparent and communicated clearly to the customer base, and where necessary they need to be reflected in the contractual arrangements with customers.

The HRWS should be part of all strategic, planning, investment and operational activities. It may therefore be necessary to establish a special unit with responsibilities for the comprehensive implementation of HRWS principles and the correct application of HRWS criteria. This will allow for clear priority setting, and it will ensure that items outside of the core operations of a utility (such as effective communications, in-service training on the application of HRWS criteria and principles for staff, or research and development with a specific HRWS perspective) can be boosted. Governments may channel their earmarked subsidies (for example, earmarked to support one-time connection costs for eligible households) through such a fund and add weight to the need for compliance with transparency and accountability principles.

Another way of strengthening the resource base is the engagement of communities themselves through contributions they can make in kind. Examples of how a pro-poor policy can be effected this way are given in various sections of this Manual. This approach comes with the caveat that its opportunity costs (in other words, what other productive or social activities do the community members have to forgo to contribute to such a programme?) must not be overlooked.

A key aspect linking the HRWS to budget/finance/accounts is that of tariff structures, which must be detailed, transparent and easy to understand. Universal affordability is key. Usually, tariffs for new connections and for water consumption are fixed by public authorities. In several countries, these tariff structures are set or must be approved by the economic regulator. In those cases, it is for governments to require regulators to design/accept tariff structures and set/accept tariffs that reflect the HRWS criteria and principles effectively. Where no such regulatory mechanisms exist, formal service providers will have to negotiate with government authorities directly to come to a tariff structure that will address the issue of affordability satisfactorily (see Chapter 3). Therefore, responsibility and accountability in these cases refer straight back to the duty bearer.

6.5 OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Water and sanitation policymakers have frequently raised the issue that there is a lack of consideration of the HRWS at the local level, while local systems operators, utilities and management boards have frequently referred to a lack of relevance of the HRWS to day-to-day water and sanitation practice.

Even without considering the HRWS, service providers indeed face a range of challenges in service delivery. The delivery of acceptable services to on-site sanitation systems, for example, will have to rely on a stable human resource base (in a work environment with little or no real job incentives), will require investment in proper equipment (tanker trucks) and its maintenance, will need access to the septic tanks and latrines of households in densely populated informal settlements and will have to rely on functioning treatment plants where faecal sludge can be deposited. In addition to these challenges, sanitation providers

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in this example will now also have to consider the affordability and reliability of their services, match their business plan to service what is already not an easy market to operate in with principles of non-discrimination (either imposed through regulation or self-imposed) and ensure their services are delivered while applying the principles of accountability, transparency and sustainability. In this example in particular, where small private enterprises play a key role, government assistance may be required to ensure the multiple issues are addressed simultaneously and lead to updated, sustainable standard operational procedures.

The explicit or implicit HRWS targets developed through corporate planning and management will need to be pursued through a utility's operations and maintenance.

A good start is for the operations department to develop a compendium of technologies, materials and practices that are compliant with human rights criteria and principles. They should be feasible for use and application in the local context and they should be sustainable in the environmental, social and economic sense. Establishing a list of infrastructure designs and materials that maximise adequate services at the lowest possible cost sustainably is a further extension of such a compendium.

Too often, operations are driven by considerations of where progress can be made easiest or where operations will have the greatest returns. These should be substituted by considerations of how all groups particularly the most vulnerable people can be reached and where the greatest reductions in inequality are feasible.

For many of the technical activities in the day-to-day routine – dealing with pressure issues and leaks, checking on meter accuracy, and verifying water quality along the production and delivery chain – it is difficult to make generic recommendations on how HRWS issues can be introduced, and individual utilities will have to assess what is relevant and feasible under local circumstances.

Proper asset management and the establishment of realistic maintenance schedules are crucial in the prevention of regression in access and other HRWS criteria. It is easier and more efficient to plan and budget for regular maintenance than to deal with emergencies that result from a lack of maintenance. Effective customer relations and, particularly in underprivileged areas, community involvement in the reporting back on the functioning of the system will help perceive early-warning signals of where maintenance is not adequate and the risk of regression is real.

Rational savings in replacement materials, without sacrificing quality and durability, and taking into account resilience with respect to more extreme weather events resulting from global climate change will help stretch the budget to allow for further extensions to underserved and unserved populations.

6.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As a rule, existing utilities will have monitoring and evaluation procedures in place, aimed at measuring progress towards their organisation's objectives, using performance and output indicators. This monitoring often emphasises the status of infrastructure and the quality of drinking water at the point of delivery. There may be value in including records of complaints collected at customer centres and information fed back by bill collectors in utility monitoring.

Formal operators that are distinct from responsible public authorities monitor all the performance indicators that are prescribed in their license/contract agreement. When these indicators are related to a HRWS criterion or principle, for example when they track the service expansion or the improvement of water safety, or the location of unserved people, these monitoring activities are essential to the progressive realisation of the HRWS.

Yet, there may be other monitoring and surveillance programmes ongoing in a country that assess access and use of drinking water and sanitation services and facilities, drinking water quality or the quality of surface water and groundwater sources.

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It is therefore important to first explore to what extent monitoring and evaluation efforts can be coordinated at a national level, what needs to be done to achieve comparability of datasets and what gaps remain after national reconciliation and integration of all these activities. This implies identifying the various actors on the national and international monitoring stage—in many countries this process was already set in motion by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), which tracked progress towards the water and sanitation targets contained in the framework of the MDGs. Important actors who can provide nationally representative datasets include national bureaus of statistics, drinking water regulators (although in some cases their surveillance coverage is limited to urban areas), health authorities and country offices of UN agencies and the World Bank. Academic institutions may also have robust datasets, but often these are focused on specific areas or specific population groups and therefore not nationally representative. They may be valuable, however, for the purpose of triangulation.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; see Annex B) include targets for universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. These include elements relevant to HRWS criteria and principles. The related indicators will have to be tracked in all countries.

Once a viable level of coordinated monitoring efforts at the national level has been achieved, then the remaining gaps with respect to HRWS criteria will need to be identified and addressed. Public authorities responsible for water/sanitation services will allocate operational targets to service providers mandated by them and request adequate reporting of progress made. They will also request that service providers report on indicators that are under the responsibility of other HRWS institutions, as appropriate. Utilities can then decide how to best expand their monitoring activities in a way that serves their corporate interests as well as the interest of promoting the HRWS.

The measurement of specific human rights indicators, namely the reduction of inequality and discrimination, can be undertaken under a utility's monitoring programme, but it may be viewed as more neutral if it is executed by an independent national body such as the national statistics bureau.

A utility's customer base is an important and unique source of information, and modern technology allows data-mining on behavioural trends, the coverage of water and sanitation issues in twitter messages, and economic aspects such as willingness to pay for certain service aspects.

The principle of transparency requires that monitoring outcomes are regularly published and made available to national and local authorities, to the customer base and to the public at large—the internet is an efficient medium for this. Such openness is of importance for the public image of the utility and adds to the credibility of its other corporate responsibility activities.

6.7 CUSTOMER SERVICES

Utilities should actively promote customer-oriented management through attitude change that ensures every customer is valued. For the rights holders (in the case of the HRWS: the users of drinking water and sanitation services) a low-threshold mechanism of recourse is essential. Without a user-friendly complaint mechanism people will lose their faith in the utility's sincerity in adopting a human-rights-based approach, they will lose their faith in the human rights concept at large or they may be incentivised to take their case to court—which may be time-consuming, expensive and possibly detrimental for the utility's image.

It is therefore worth investing in strengthening the customer services, in dealing with complaints in a serious and timely manner, and at the same time reaching out to those customers who are faced with problems in meeting their payment obligations towards the service provider. Monitoring of behaviours and being alert to early warning signs of people being unable to pay their bills allow for a proactive approach in customer management.

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Customer services can also take on an additional service approach—for example, in areas where a utility is temporarily or structurally incapable of ensuring 24/7 provision of safe drinking water, it may inform its customers of the proper use of household water treatment and provide them with the necessary materials and equipment. Household water treatment does not replace a reliable supply service, certainly not in human rights terms, but in the course of progressive realisation it is an effective stop-gap intervention that can contribute significantly to an improved health status.

In the case of emergencies or other incidents, when services are seriously disrupted, customer services and communications departments must have protocols ready to secure alternative services with clear communications to the customers about the nature of the disruption, its expected duration and the alternatives offered. Again, such protocols must pay explicit attention to the way vulnerable individuals, households and communities should be protected from being disproportionately affected by service disruptions.

6.8 COMMUNICATIONS

Any utility large enough to have a communications department should have that department formulate a new communications strategy for the promotion of the HRWS. This should cover: providing information to staff, customers and to the general public, information to associations of water and sanitation practitioners at the national and international (IWA) level, and reports to the national/local authorities who themselves have to report progress in the progressive realisation of the HRWS to the national/international community. It should also cover internal communication needs on the relevance of HRWS within utility operations and management.

Staff should be informed about the human rights obligations, and how these translate into the way the utility operates. Bringing staff members together to discuss the implications in their day-to-day work has an important learning objective. This can be supported by a range of information materials, from flyers to videos.

Communications to customers should inform them about the nature of the HRWS, the new policies and strategies of the provider with respect to the progressive realisation of the HRWS, and what the customer's rights and responsibilities are in this new context. Communications should be designed for specific target audiences, bearing in mind levels of literacy and using cultural customs such as local theatre and puppet shows.

As the HRWS is a new component in the international human rights framework, it is also important to document experiences and communicate these to the human rights community. This will help establish communication channels that will also be of benefit to the further evolution of the issue within the utility. At the international level, IWA can play a significant role here. It can help create a body of information about experiences applying the HRWS—what works and what does not work.

Perhaps most importantly, regular direct or indirect communications to the national authorities should report on progress made towards the goal of universal enjoyment of the rights to water and sanitation. Only with such factual inputs will the government be able to present an aggregated picture of progressive realisation of the HRWS in the country.

6.9 HUMAN RESOURCES

New functions related to the promotion of the HRWS in various departments of a utility will require an assessment of additional staff needs, including the formulation of post descriptions and related performance indicators, the recruitment of staff for these positions and the training of existing staff. New staff must

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have excellent communications skills, not only to promote HRWS concepts within the utility, but also in their contacts outside of the utility.

Human resource development and management has a critical role to play in strengthening a provider's performance with respect to promoting the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. Medium- to large-sized utilities will have a department dedicated to staff recruitment, development and training.

The human resources department should initiate a programme of planning, developing, implementing and evaluating education and training for existing staff, in response to needs arising from new technological developments, from new legal and regulatory requirements and from internal reorganisations. The recognition of the HRWS constitutes an obvious rationale for the development of an in-service training component which aims to create awareness of the nature of the HRWS, convey the criteria and principles of the HRWS and the associated obligations implied for the day-to-day management and operations of the utility.

Adult learning with a clear objective of connecting the different parts of the organisation to most efficiently address the HRWS issues should be based on the principles of problem-based learning. Learning seminars and workshops should be structured around the utility's essential functions offering opportunities to discover how and when HRWS can contribute and strengthen the corporate model.

IWA studies on human resource issues in drinking water supply and sanitation services have resulted in several recommendations that reflect human rights principles (IWA 2014). For example, to enhance community buy-in in water and sanitation projects in informal settlements, it is recommended to hire people from these communities as an affirmative action under the operator's recruitment programme.

6.10 IN CONCLUSION

More than from any of the specific recommendations presented in the previous sections, HRWS criteria and principles will benefit from an organisation-wide change of mentality, so that every staff member in his/her day-to-day activities has the human rights criteria and principles clearly in mind.

This change in mentality will have to be fostered by the management of the utility, and will have to pervade the entire organisation. Frequent progress reporting will provide the government with the required evidence for progressive realisation and will help build a perception among the rights holders that their service provider is worthy of their trust. Reporting success stories, especially in the initial phases of the process, will help motivate staff and customers.

Like the human rights to water and sanitation themselves, the process of integrating the human-rights-based approach into the routine practice of utilities will be one of progressive realisation. It can be expected to take several years before utilities can claim they have truly absorbed the criteria and principles of the HRWS to their full extent.

In connection with essential utility functions, and in particular with the assessment of different service types and levels using human rights criteria and principles, the 2015 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation provides important insights and information—especially on how the realisation of the human rights is influenced by the way in which these different types of service are delivered¹³.

¹³Léo Heller, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation. The 2015 report to the UN General Assembly: Different types and levels of services and the human rights to water and sanitation: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/WaterAndSanitation/SRWater/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx.

