



ZIMBABWE

National Environmental Health Policy

I. Background

i. Environmental health situation

1. Human excreta disposal, air pollution due to gas emissions from vehicles and power generation, hazardous substances and articles, radioactive discharges, all account for the increase in environmental public health problems and challenges.
2. The national rural sanitation inventory carried out in 1997/98 found that national sanitation coverage among the rural households was nearly 40%; school sanitation was at 90% while sanitation at rural business centres, institutional residences and other centres was 100%. Hygiene enabling facilities and safe water supplies were found in 80% of the households.
3. The environmental public health services in Zimbabwe have expanded greatly in terms of infrastructure facilities. The expectations of Zimbabweans are continuously growing, and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare has not been able to provide all the services because of its limited capacity and resources.
4. Inadequate financing of the health sector has affected implementation of environmental public health programmes.
5. The burden put to bear on the national focus by the provision of medical services on preventable environmental public health related diseases provides a big strain on Zimbabweans.

ii. Implications of the environmental health situation

1. Low levels of coverage for water supply and sanitation provision underscore the need for assuring long term national development plans for environmental health interventions.
2. Communities have not changed attitudes and practices in community participatory programmes with the result that diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have high incidence rates.
3. Environmental issues that must be considered include: refuse collection, storage and disposal systems; disposal of clinical and toxic wastes and air pollution.
4. The National coverage for environmental public health workers and environmental health technicians to the population in Zimbabwe is 1:12 000 and 1:30 000 respectively. WHO recommends a ratio of 1:20,000 for environmental public health officers and 1:10 000 for environmental public health technicians.



iii. Areas of policy emphasis

1. Delivery of environmental public health services by the Ministry of Health and Child welfare in relation to available resources;
2. The relationship of the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare with other stakeholders and providers of environmental public health services;
3. The duties and rights of the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare as provider of environmental public health services;
4. The duties and rights of the individual, family and community as users of environmental public health services;
5. The functions of the local authorities as environmental public health services providing agencies under co-ordination and supervision by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing;
6. The powers and role of both the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and the core ministries in health and environment issues.

II. National Policy

i. Principles/philosophy of the policy.

1. The environmental public health services of Zimbabwe shall be based on the principles of PHC, sustainable development.
2. Environmental health issues for consideration include: special measures for women; urban poor; rural population; children; workers in farming, mining, factories, hospitals; training; research and technology; information education and communication; community participation.
3. Cooperation with all sectors whose activities have impact on environmental public health status of the Zimbabweans shall be encouraged and fostered;

ii. Responsibilities of stakeholders concerned with the provision of environmental health services.

Environmental health services

Environmental public health service includes environmental public health activities of water supply; sanitation; environmental public health disease control; control of disease outbreaks and epidemics; environmental public health legislation; control of pollution levels in the atmospheric environment; air pollution; water pollution; control of dangerous radioactive materials; inspection of public premises; human habitat and safe



housing; solid wastes disposal; liquid waste disposal, quality, surveillance and management; food hygiene safety and regulation; vector and vermin control; noise control; occupational and industrial hygiene; environmental public health impact assessment; port health activities; education of public on environmental public health; advice to local authorities on environmental public health.

Provision of environmental health services

1. Environmental public health services are those provided/operated by government/stakeholders, councils or those supported by parastatals and NGOs.
2. All providers of environmental public health services, whether public or private, shall ensure that their activities are planned, constructed, operated and maintained in accordance with generally accepted technical and professional standards.
3. Local authorities should ensure that they have in their employment appropriate environmental public health officers and technicians to provide an efficient environmental public health service.
4. An appropriate database on environmental public health shall be developed for use by all environmental public health departments in Zimbabwe.

Responsibility of Ministry of Health as policy-maker and supervisor

1. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare shall be responsible for the formulation, adoption, promulgation, regulation, interpretation, coordination, and supervision of the environmental public health policy.
2. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare will collaborate with recognized regional and international organizations.
3. The Ministry shall ensure that all stakeholders are provided with information on guidelines of environmental public health issues.
4. Authorised officers shall at all times have access to any establishment providing environmental public health services. Where the activities of the establishment providing environmental health services is considered to be harmful or potentially harmful to users/public, an authorized officer may order remedial measures.
5. The ministry shall pursue its supervisory role by means of advice and consultation and other mechanisms for inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination.

Interaction of the Ministry of Health with Other Stakeholders

1. Environmental public health issues are also reflected in many other acts, and by laws. These are enforced in part by the Ministry with shared responsibilities by other stakeholders.



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2. The Ministry of Health and Child welfare will continue to oversee the overall interest of environmental public health programmes through permanent membership of the national committees.
 3. Government has developed significant policies on sustainable development, environment and health being administered by specific stakeholders to cite a few:
 - a. Environmental management bill to be administered by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.
 - b. The Zimbabwe national water authority administers the water act.
 4. Government has defined portfolio responsibilities for some components of environmental public health to ministers and their ministries which will be continually reviewed.

Rights of Users/Consumers of environmental public health services

1. Access to environmental public health services shall be a basic human right.
2. As beneficiaries of environmental public health programmes, rural populations must of necessity contribute to their provision through self-help and in kind.
3. The urban population in most environmental public health programmes will pay for the provision of services.
4. Persons that use environmental public health facilities shall respect the rights and susceptibilities of other clients/users.
5. Users must observe all rules concerning the organisation, operation, and management of the environmental public health facilities/services.
6. Appropriate local authorities committees or other cooperative associations responsible for representing and defending the interest of users will be established to look after the interest of users of environmental public health facilities.

Institutional and organisational structures

1. The policy reaffirms the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare as the major player in policy formulation, planning and coordination in terms of environmental public health.
2. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare shall empower the public health advisory board to coordinate and advise on all matters of sustainable development, environment and health among stakeholders. The PHAB shall be



provided with the necessary resources to allow it to effectively carry out its mandate. The sub-committee on environmental public health of the PHAB will continue to service the public health advisory board.

iii. Implementation of the policy

Monitoring and evaluation

1. The ministry will make radical changes in this policy direction in strengthening the capacity of the unit through improving the staffing in order to be able to address the national environmental public health issues.
2. The ministry through environmental public health coordinator unit will develop effective strategies and action plan in line with activities reflected in the national health strategy for Zimbabwe 1997-2007 for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the environmental public health policy.