

**Social Policy and Strategy  
for the  
Water & Wastewater  
Sectors**

July  
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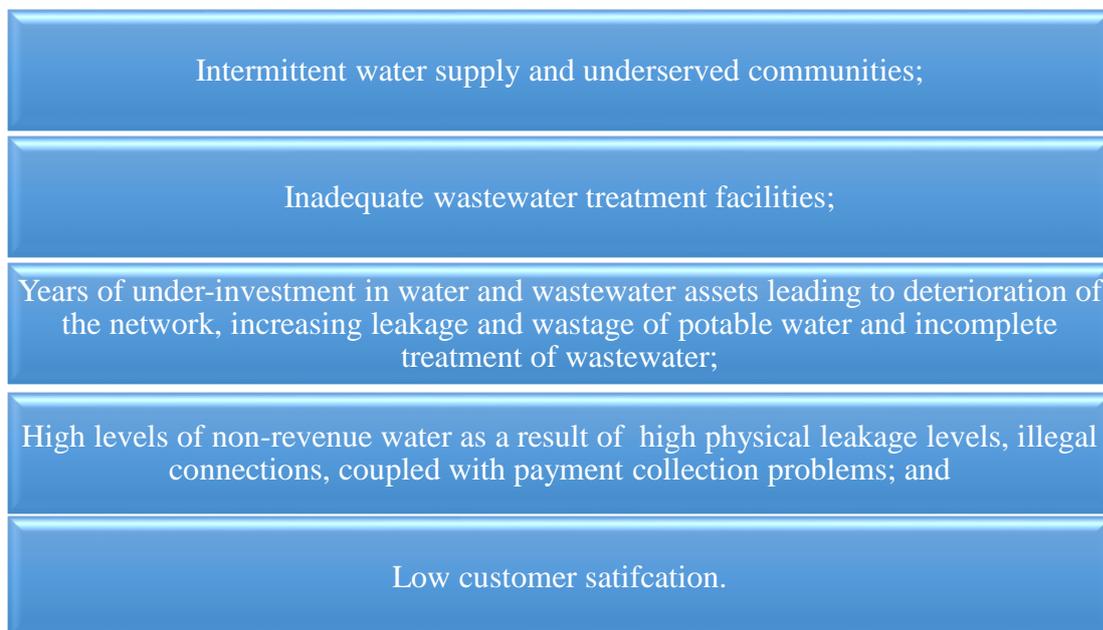
This paper presents a summary of the RIC's social policy proposals, as they relate to accessibility, quality of services, consumer protection and affordability for the water and wastewater sectors.

Summary  
Document

## What is Social Policy?

Social policy aims to improve people's well-being and is especially concerned with the welfare of those who experience some form of disadvantage<sup>1</sup>. It provides an overarching framework that guides how societies meet basic human needs such as water, food, health and security<sup>2</sup>. Given the importance of household water supply and sanitation services for human existence, social dimensions need to be considered when decisions are made regarding the provision and pricing of water and wastewater services. As a result, there is a need for regulatory policy to address social factors that may impede consumers' access to water and wastewater services.

### The Water and Wastewater Sectors in T&T are characterised by:



### RIC's Social Policy Objectives

In the context of utility regulation for the water and wastewater sectors, social policy is intended to ensure that there is access to safe drinking water and sanitation services by addressing various factors. The RIC's Social Policy objectives can be grouped into four main categories; accessibility, quality of service, consumer protection and affordability. The objectives and approaches under each category are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Social Policy in Australia: Understanding for Action 3rd Edition, Alison Mc Clelland, Paul Smyth, March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Lucinda Platt, London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Social Policy.

## Physical Accessibility and Reliability of Supply

- Improve access to a reliable supply of pipe-borne water;
- Promote and support strategies to assist the poor to gain access to the pipe borne-water; and
- Promote improvement of WASA's coverage of the wastewater services to low income communities with poor sanitation/wastewater management through its Price Review.

## Quality of Service

- Promote measures to achieve pipe-borne water quality that meets World Health Organisation guidelines;
- Support consistent and mandatory maintenance of privately owned wastewater systems/plants;
- Implement water and wastewater quality of service standards;
- Promote measures to achieve a high-quality supply of truck-borne water including the regular disinfection of water tankers used to provide truck-borne supply;
- Promote consumer awareness of water quality and hygiene issues in collaboration with the service provider and other relevant institutions;
- Participate in water quality and health education initiatives of other organisations; and
- Support WASA's phased adoption of abandoned sewerage systems of private developers, homeowners and other government-owned facilities, to minimise the impacts of untreated effluent on the environment.

## RIC's Social Policy Objectives Cont'd

### Consumer Protection

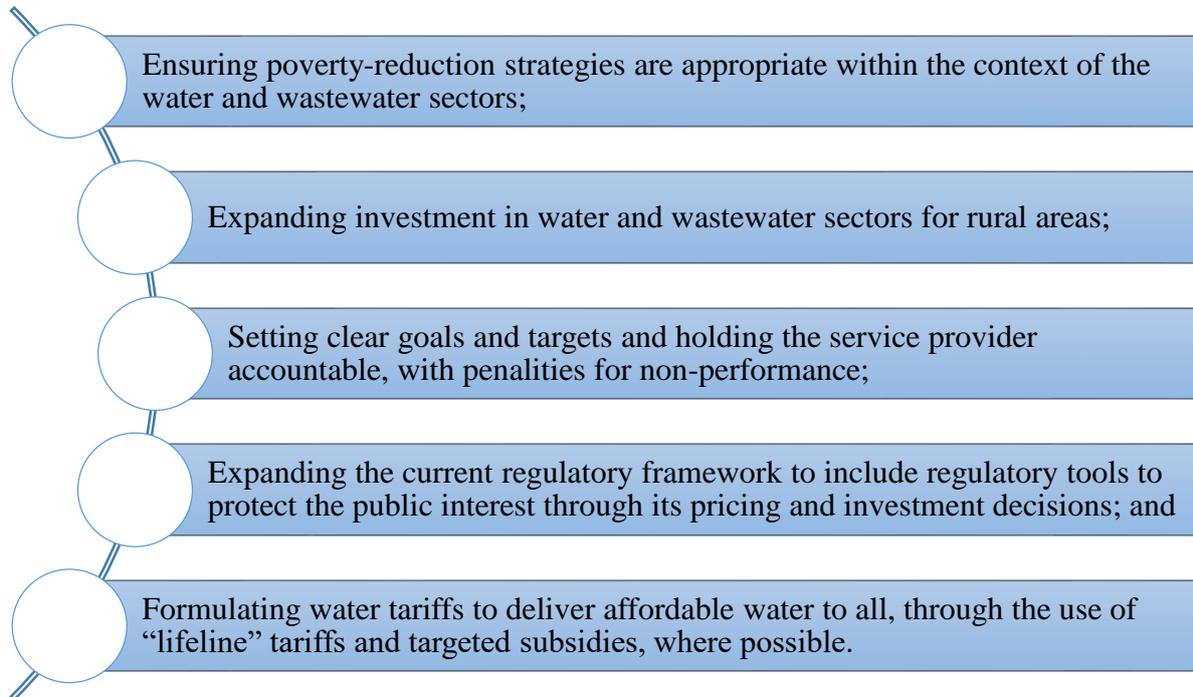
- Encourage strengthened communications between the service provider and its customers in relation to service interruptions, investment decisions and customer queries;
- Facilitate public access to the RIC's customer redress function through; the utilisation of a toll-free telephone number to receive calls from the public, its website and social media platforms;
- Promulgate its rules and procedures for resolution of consumer complaints by disseminating information on its RIC website and where necessary, provide explanations to ensure that they are understood by the public; and
- Encourage community/stakeholder participation through stakeholder workshops/forums, national consultations, stakeholder information days, etc.

### Affordability and Social Tariffs

- Ensure that residential customer tariff levels are within internationally established affordability thresholds;
- Establish a lifeline block (“social block”) in the tariff structure for consumption-related tariff. This block will reflect basic needs to ensure an acceptable quality of life with respect to hygiene and basic household needs;
- Include an explicit subsidy to the lower income groups for meeting the connection charge (e.g. a fixed dollar discount on connection charge) and which would require the service provider to develop and use an appropriate credit system to spread the payment for the connection charge over time; and
- Support the Utilities Assistance Programme and similar targeted subsidy schemes established by the Government. The qualifying criteria of such programmes must be properly assessed and applied to ensure high targeting performance.

## The Way Forward

The RIC’s Social Policy proposals for the water and wastewater sectors include the following strategies:



**All persons wishing to comment on the document, “Social Policy and Strategy for the Water and Wastewater Sectors” are invited to review the main document and submit written comments using any of the options provided.**