

2017 YOKOHAMA FORUM STATEMENT

August 3rd, 2017

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the City of Yokohama organized the Fourth Executive Forum for Enhancing Sustainability on Urban Water Service in Asian Region from 1st to 4th August 2017, in Yokohama, Japan.

Government agencies, executives of water utilities and water experts from 13 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam joined and shared their experiences at the forum.

Following one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), “By 2030, achieve Universal and Equitable Access to Safe and Affordable Drinking Water for All”, the Fourth Executive Forum set the following theme: “Take action toward the next step – Universal and Equitable Access, Finance, and Governance”.

Through intense discussion, all delegates unanimously agreed on the concepts and actions as follows:

1. The delegates well noted that we are working today for the well-being of the present and the next generation, for the liberation of women, children and the underprivileged from their current difficulties regarding water.
2. Water utilities should have long term perspective through elaborate long-term missions and action plans, while the governments should set a clear policy for achieving Goal 6 of SDGs.
3. In order to secure a safe, stable and sustainable water supply, water utilities must consider Water Safety Plans as a central role.
4. Recognizing Water as a Human Right, water utilities must provide this basic service to all low-income households at an affordable tariff. It is very well known that the service connection cost is the biggest barrier that keeps low-income households from accessing this basic service. Therefore, by waiver or discount, by installment payment, by subsidy of social service connection, and/or by community involvement, the human right to water will have to be secured.

5. Financing is one of the key elements to achieve our goals. Finance could be covered through: water tariff that allows utility to recover their costs, government funding, external development partners and private sector participation.

6. Although a water tariff is an important source of income for stable management of water utility, there are only few utilities that have appropriate water tariffs. The majority of customers complain about the water service rather than about the water tariff. Customer satisfaction is the key issue in water tariff revision. Customer affordability should also be considered.

7. To get funding from Government and external institutions, water utilities must carry out detailed analysis of their current status and set business plans for efficient investment.

8. Cost reduction is a key for steady development of water utilities. Cost reduction can be done through good engineering design and supervision, reduction of energy consumption by efficient water distribution and up-grading to energy-efficient equipment, reduction of non-revenue water (NRW) through elimination of water theft, renewal of pipes and improvement of operation and staff efficiency.

9. Transparency, integrity and accountability are the three core values of good governance. Good governance can be secured by formulating and enforcing fair policies, legal framework and regulations, and having the participation of stakeholders. Autonomous regulation is a key aspect to bringing transparency. Using Performance Indicators (PIs) makes it possible to visualize and objectively measure performance efficiency of water utilities. PIs need to be periodically monitored.

10. In order to operate and sustain water supply services, water utilities need not only maintain the technical levels of each employee, but also develop human resources in such a way that each employee becomes supportive to the enhancement of institutional capacity.

Based on the outcome of the discussion in sharing experiences, all delegates commit to take action, as a Water Family, toward the next step for universal and equitable access to safe, sustainable and affordable water for all.

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Yokohama, Japan