Ministry of Water Resources
Republic of Sierra Leone

“Water is life......”

“State of Water Supply in Sierra Leone - Challenges and Opportunities”

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BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE WATER SITUATION:

i. There are two utilities in the sector with one responsible for urban water supply and the other for rural water supply.

ii. Currently less than half of the population have access to safe drinking water.

iii. Generally, pipe borne water supply is largely limited to Freetown which is the capital, but with the main dam grossly inadequate to meet the city demand.

iv. Four out of the sixteen district HQ have no water supply facility at all whilst the rest have facilities that are grossly inadequate to meet basic demand.

v. Most rural areas outside the district HQ rely on very few water wells and solar boreholes whilst the majority rely on unprotected water sources.

vi. Population growth has led to demand side outweighing supply side leading to immense pressure on government to address the situation.
KEY CHALLENGES:

i. LOW CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ALLOCATIONS TO FUND MAJOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THAT WOULD INCREASE ACCESS TO PORTABLE WATER.

ii. LOW TARIFF STRUCTURE LEADING TO LACK OF PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN TERMS OF CAPITAL INJECTION. THIS ALSO AFFECTS EXISTING UTILITIES ABILITY TO MEET THEIR O&M EXPENSES AND INVEST IN SUSTAINING CAPEX.

iii. VARIATION IN THE RATIO OF POPULATION GROWTH COMPARE TO INVESTMENT IN WATER INFRASTRUCTURES HAVE RESULTED IN INADEQUATE SUPPLY CAPACITY TO MEET DEMAND.

iv. CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEFORESTATION HAVE RESULTED TO CATCHMENT AREAS AND WATERSHEDS DRYING UP LEADING TO SHORTAGE OF WATER SUPPLY. THIS IS VERY OBVIOUS IN THE CAPITAL FREETOWN.

v. RELATIVELY NEW MINISTRY WITH LOTS OF CAPACITY GAPS IN TERMS OF HUMAN RESOURCE, LOGISTICAL, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT.
KEY OPPORTUNITIES:

i. Plans to reform the sector through unbundling of water generation from water supply

ii. The enactment into law the National Water Resources Management Agency

iii. Government policy to encourage public, private partnerships (PPP) in the construction of major water supply projects especially in urban areas where market potential do exist

iv. Existing short, medium to long term water supply projects entailing construction of solar powered boreholes, containerize water systems, gravity water supply systems, new dams, transmission and distribution networks, etc.

v. Integrating sanitation and irrigation projects in future inventions

vi. Enhancing capacities through setting up national training center, formulating curricula for water engineers and promoting graduate degree in water engineering with the University of Sierra Leone