



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
LAKE VICTORIA BASIN COMMISSION**

**WATER
QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
POLICY
GUIDELINE**

Compiled from the 2021 national Statistical
Abstracts of the Partner States

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THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

- Republic of Burundi
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Republic of Kenya
- Republic of Rwanda
- Federal Republic of Somalia
- Republic of South Sudan
- United Republic of Tanzania
- Republic of Uganda





INTRODUCTION

The Draft EAC Water Quality Management Policy Policy Guideline was developed to respond to the water quality challenges in the region and the threat to the millions of livelihoods dependent on water for health and socio-economic development. This policy guideline mainly serves to; (i) strengthen the prevention and control of water pollution from point and non-point sources, and (ii) support the harmonisation of water quality policies, regulations and standards to inform water quality planning and management.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The East African region covers an area of 4.815 million km², (4.3% of which is open water bodies) with an estimated population of 299 million (about 24.3% of the population of Africa) and a combined GDP (PPP) of US\$ 675.5 billion contribution from fisheries (about 10.9% of the GDP of Africa[1]). The East African Community region has abundant water resources, from vast lakes to winding rivers and pristine aquifers. As the demands on these resources has continued to grow, the management of water quality and protection of the health of aquatic ecosystems has become an imperative. Ensuring access to clean and safe water is a human right and moral duty, an economic necessity, and a strategic necessity for the East African Community.

- Promote active partnerships and collaboration among diverse groups of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, private sector entities, and local communities, towards the implementation of water quality management measures.
- Prioritize and enhance resource mobilization strategies (financial, manpower/expertise, technical assistance, technological, land, materials among others) to support appropriate water quality management actions at regional, national and local levels.
- Enhance advocacy and public awareness of water quality management practices across the entire spectrum of stakeholders.

The need for this Policy Guideline

Freshwater bodies in the EAC region have continuously experienced deteriorating water quality characterized by periodic algae blooms, high turbidity, suspended solids, high faecal coliform loads, fish kills, and grey-to-brown colouration. This is further exacerbated by extreme events associated with climate change. To sustainably address these challenges, the need for a unified approach to water quality management in the region was evident. An analysis of the existing national policy, legal and institutional framework revealed the inexistence of stand-alone water quality management policies in all the EAC Partner States. In some cases, provisions for water quality management are scattered in sector policies and laws such as national water policies, water supply acts, environmental management policies, waste management regulations, and public health acts, among others. The development of a regional Water Quality Policy guideline was, therefore, deemed critical to render effective, well-coordinated, and sustainable water quality management within the region.

- Take deliberate measures to domesticate, incorporate and /or apply the Draft EAC Water Quality Management Policy Guidelines in all their water quality management activities across all water basins in each Partner State.
- Leverage the prevailing and emerging opportunities/challenges to progressively align and harmonize respective water quality management practices with this policy guideline.
- Enforce and monitor the application of water quality standards, laws and regulations at all levels in line with the draft policy guideline.
- Promote and support sustainable transboundary water cooperation among riparian Partner States for effective broad-based, all-encompassing transboundary water quality management.
- Support the generation and sharing of reliable and up-to-date data and information on water quality for evidence-based decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS/ KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Development process

The development of the Draft EAC Water Quality Management Policy Guideline was through a consultative process approach involving several stakeholders drawn from all the EAC Partner States. The process was led by the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) under the Nile Cooperation for Climate Resilience (NCCR) Projection collaboration with key stakeholders from all Partner States of the EAC, the EAC Secretariat, and the Nile Basin Initiative.

The formulation of the draft policy guideline started from 2021 to 2023 and was informed by a comprehensive analysis of the prevailing situation in the basin. This analysis covered the policy, legal and institutional framework for water resources governance in the basin which ultimately informed policy intervention areas and the policy recommendations.

Implementation Arrangements:

Implementation of this Policy Guideline will be guided by the Treaty Establishing the East African Community (EAC), specifically, Article 14 (3) (i), and the Protocol for Sustainable Development of Lake Victoria Basin of 2003. Its implementation will be a two-pronged parallel process at the regional and national level informed by the EAC Water Quality Management Strategy and Action Plan. The EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers on Environment and Natural Resources will provide the overarching regional governance and policy oversight on its implementation, while at the national level, the relevant ministry and agencies responsible for water resources and water quality will oversee the implementation of the requisite regionally agreed actions at the national level.

Key Recommendations

For effective and sustainable implementation of the draft EAC Water Quality Management Policy Guideline, it is recommended that the EAC, the Partner States, private sector, and other relevant stakeholders implement the following key recommendations as appropriate at all relevant levels:

POLICY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The Draft EAC Water Quality Management (WQM) Policy Guideline is meant to sustainably control environmental degradation, safeguard public health, and guarantee water of good quality to support socio-economic activities and job creation through effective transboundary water cooperation. The goal of the draft policy guideline is to contribute to the attainment of the EAC Water Vision of *“sustainably and equitably managed and developed water resources for regional socio-economic growth and environmental security.”*

The specific objectives of the Policy are to:

1. Strengthen the policy, legal, and regulatory framework for WQM, improving technical and institutional capacities for water sampling and quality testing, and bolstering regional and national frameworks for WQ monitoring and pollution control.
2. Enhancing the generation, storage, processing, and dissemination of WQ data to support evidence-based decision-making for effective WQM and pollution control.
3. Promoting research and innovation to support WQM and pollution reduction, building capacity, advocacy, and awareness raising amongst all stakeholders.

- **Research and innovation:** The draft policy guideline promotes partnerships between public institutions responsible for water quality management with universities, research institutions, and industries to support research in water quality issues and develop appropriate technologies for water testing, and water and wastewater treatment.
- **Capacity building:** In response to the varying capacities across the EAC Member States, the draft policy calls for capacity building, advocacy and awareness raising, and sharing experiences across the whole water quality management stakeholder spectrum.
- **Cross-cutting issues:** The draft policy guideline underscores the importance of addressing cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, in all water quality management activities. It aims at ensuring that vulnerable populations and ecosystems are considered in policy implementation.

THE POLICY GUIDELINE

The draft policy guideline addresses eight key areas that respond to the prevailing and emerging water quality challenges, promote sustainable water quality management, and ensure access to clean and safe water across the EAC region.

- **Harmonisation of Policy and Legal Framework:** The draft policy calls for harmonising water quality policies or domestication of the Draft EAC Water Quality Management Policy Guideline into national policies, regulations, standards, and guidelines across EAC Member States to ensure a unified approach to water quality management.
- **Strengthening the Institutional Framework:** The draft policy guideline calls for review and strengthening of national and regional institutional frameworks for water quality management. This aims to reduce the fragmentation of water pollution control functions across institutions, strengthen cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration, and strengthen water testing laboratories.

- **Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment:** The draft policy guideline advocates for robust and well-coordinated national and regional water quality monitoring and assessment initiatives. This includes establishing and operationalising a standardised data collection, sharing, and analysis system to support informed decision-making and early detection of pollution incidents.
- **Control of point and non-point pollution:** The draft policy guideline promotes the improvement of ambient water and prevention of water pollution through wastewater treatment facilities, storm water and solid waste management facilities, compliance with effluent discharge standards, control of pollution from maritime transport, promotion of cleaner production processes in industry and mining sectors, and protection of water sources and ecosystems from diffuse pollution sources.
- **Disaster risk management:** The draft policy guideline advocates for developing and mainstreaming national and regional disaster risk management strategies into water quality management and pollution control measures.