

Liberia

Country Overview

1. Country Context

Under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Liberia, H.E George M. Weah, the Government has initiated series of steps to guide the blueprint of Liberia's development agenda.

The government immediately developed its national development agenda called the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018 which is the surest pathway to deliver the critical human, social, economic and infrastructure development to a severely deserving population. The aim is to collectively work with development partners to change the narratives on key national aggregate indicators that are aligned with the African Union Agenda 2063 and Global Sustainable Goals (SDGs) 2030. The PAPD alludes to Liberia wealth in natural resources but is deprived of development largely because its human capital lacks knowledge to transfer the natural resources into wealth. The government acknowledges progress made over the past decade through investment made and assistance received. The current realities are: these advancements could be rendered non-sustainable when tested against prevailing threats of climate change and global pandemics such as the COVID-19.

2. SDG & WASH

Status of the sector in terms of the baseline for the SDGs, progress achieved since the SDGs were announced:

The PAPD identifies seven national targets for WASH in Liberia. By 2023, Liberia is expected to increase access to basic safe drinking water services by 85%: a projected 9% from the current 76% access. Access to safely managed drinking water supply under SDG definition remains below 4% at national level with rural population under 1% served. The government of Liberia wishes to expand national coverage for urban and rural by 15% respectively. In 2019, access to basic sanitation coverage at combined urban and rural levels was recorded at 17%. There is projection to robustly increase basic sanitation access to 65% and end open defecation by 2025. A roadmap to end open defecation in Liberia has been developed, validated but substantially lack financial support and yet to be endorsed by the government. From an existing 0% the government development agenda (PAPD) projects 100% District WASH Plans approval by 2023. Development of the human capacity to manage and strengthen WASH at national and subnational levels is a priority for the government.

Results of sector analysis or evaluations undertaken to review SDG 6

The WASH Sector of Liberia is now offloading the critical process leading to a Joint Sector Review. The Sector Performance Report will be entirely rewritten from national and subnational consultations. The review process will cover years 2019 to 2021 and will assess performance and provide a reliable overview of WASH financing, implementation, institutions gaps. This review includes an operative element to ensure that undertakings and priorities are followed-up on. While the country awaits the JSR, the sector with support from GLAAS and SWA had conducted two separate in-country assessments: 1. GLAAS 2021-2022 country survey and 2. Mutual Accountability Mechanism (MAM) which projected the following: Note: add MAM outcomes

National vision for the sector

The National WASH Commission is enacted by law to provide leadership and serves as panacea to fragmentation in governance of WASH across Liberia. The PAPD (2018-2023), reinforces government aim to have equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply and sanitation services for all Liberians.

Targets set for the SDGs (6.1 and 6.2)

The vision as articulated in the Government of Liberia official development strategy sets the target for SDG 6.1 and 6.2 as follows:

- By 2023, a total of 85% of Liberians will have access to basic water supply system in rural areas. This will lead to a decrease of water borne diseases and stunting in children, the elderly and the active labour force, subsequently leading to increased productivity.
- By 2023, 100% of the poor rural dwellers have their own toilet facilities and are disposing of waste in safe and sustainable manner.

Highlights of main sector challenges and gaps which may affect the attainment of the national sector vision and targets

Low/Limited National Funding

Estimates produced by the World Bank (Hutton & Varughese, 2016) suggest that Liberia must invest about 8.33 percent of its current GDP, or USD 201 million per year (2015 prices), to achieve SDGs 6.1 and 6.2 by 2030. Annual government and donor budget disbursements are nowhere close to meeting either the national or international targets and are only at around USD 37 million per year. Liberia's WASH sector is excessively dependent on external aid. Donor contributions accounted for nearly 96 percent of total sector funding between FY2015-18 and even now. The national contribution made up merely 4.3 percent of the total sector allocation, with the balance met through donor funding.

Critical institutional gaps remain

A national regulator body, National WASH Commission has been established (2017) with extremely low operational capacity. The issues of fragmentation still loom as various national institutions of government carrying out overlapping roles and responsibilities. Liberia still however needs a dedicated Water Ministry to drive coordinated WASH services, provision and implement an integrated Water Resources management program.

Main national processes / actions being undertaken to strengthen sector and make progress towards SDG 6

- Establishment of a single regulatory agency known as the National WASH Commission;
- Preparatory works for the establishment of a Water Ministry to manage policy and drive integrated planning;
- Regular reviews of sector activities and program targets through the annual Joint Sector Review and Joint quarterly monitoring;
- Increased engagement and operationalization of the WASH legislative caucus and the National Water Resource and Sanitation Board;
- Active participation of civil society organizations with focus on WASH and Climate Change;
- The development of WASH Commission fully costed Strategy Plan 2020-2025;
- Development of Costed Open Defecation Road Map 2020-2025;
- Development of WASH Regulatory Framework;
- WASH Sector Monthly Coordinator Meeting;
- Inclusion of WASH in Climate Change.

3. Collaborative Behaviors, Building Blocks and Guiding Principles

Status of development cooperation in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector; to what extent are government and partners practicing in the SWA Collaborative Behaviors, and working together effectively to ensure sustainable and equitable access to WASH

- Coordination has improved, however, more need to be done to effectuate greater mutual accountability (mutual planning and program implementation). Issues identified to strengthen the Mutual Accountability are as follow:
 - Stakeholders' participation in monthly sector coordination meeting;
 - Annual Join Sector Review not been held;
 - Endorsement and effectiveness of the One WASH Plan;
 - Endorsement and effectiveness of the WASH Pull Fund.
- Nevertheless, considering achievement, a framework has been developed at country level on how progress on the implementation of the MAM can be measured or tracked. Liberia has conducted the first in-country assessment to measures and define key indicators of success of the MAM.

The extent to which the Sector Building Blocks have been put in place and are adapted to the SDGs and the elimination of inequalities.

Not much progress or awareness has been made in this area as it requires a review and update of the National Sector Strategic Plan (expired 2017) which is yet to happen. Once that happens, the aim will be to ensure that the sector building blocks are captured within the service delivery pathways and mainstreamed in each of the pillars.

At the moment, over 30 CSOs benefited from a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) training addressing the issues of inequalities with support from SWA. This has contributed to informed advocacy toward addressing the elimination of inequalities especially to vulnerable population through policies reforms proper targeting of WASH services.

4. Eliminating Inequalities

Extent and nature of inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene: Water point mapping in 2012 & 2018 provided clues of service levels nationwide. However essential data for sanitation and hygiene are unavailable to unveil real visibility of any progress made in these areas.

Collection of data on inequalities, its causes and identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups: Systematic data not collected on inequalities, nor are there strong practices of capturing intersectionality between social groups, ages, sex, and other demographics.

Gaps in the understanding of inequalities in the sector; the actual extent of the gap is unknown due to lack of essential data. However, available limited data sets are still not driving the consciousness on understanding inequalities.

- Comparative analysis of progress made in achieving SDG6 for the general population and for the most marginalized, poorest and vulnerable groups;

There is no comprehensive research done in this area neither does there exists available reliable data on this.

- The extent to which national planning, monitoring, accountability and review processes address inequalities;

Fundamentally, there is lack of data which undermines the ability of policy makers to address these issues within review processes. At the moment, WaterAid Liberia and other Partners are supporting the National WASH Commission to set up an institutionalized system that will collect and analyze data for informed decision making.

- Progress made on progressively eliminating inequalities;

Strategies and guidelines have been developed to address inequality within service provision. Additionally, there are few partners who have implemented proof-of-concept projects to demonstrate this aspect of service provision. CSOs and staffs of the WASH Commission were trained in HRBA and data collection and management respectively. Staff of the National WASH Commission and the Ministry of Gender received training in Nigeria on the integration of gender in WASH data collection.

- Main targets of the country in terms of eliminating inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene:

Liberia set seven high-level targets for water, sanitation and hygiene services in the national development agenda (PAPD). These targets are broad and do not disintegrate for specific groups. The review of these targets is currently ongoing by the WASH Commission and partners. Meanwhile, in an effort to eliminate inequality by CSOs, the WASH Commission has put in place a Human Rights Desk at Commission to address the issues of inequalities.

- Specific laws, policy and regulations for addressing inequalities.

Liberia signed on to the UN Convention of 2010 declaring WASH is a human right;

The Constitution of Liberia also support the right to life which infer the right to water, sanitation and hygiene.

5. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Financing

- Estimate of funding needs to progressively eliminate inequalities: over 201 million USD annually according to the Sector Investment Plan 2012/2017
- Magnitude of funding deficit for SDG6: Over 1 billion united states dollars
- Approaches to close the gap (innovative, new financing mechanisms and effective use of existing resources): Improve engagement with national legislators (WASH caucus), community engagement on domestic resource mobilization, ONE WASH Plan adaptation and implementation, the adoption and implementation of recommendations from WASH Pulled Fund Study. The latest being the SWA Finance handbook, “A Handbook for Finance Ministers” and SWA Parliamentary Handbook
- Progress made (success of the above approaches): Clear national budget line identified for WASH interventions, increase knowledge of community dwellers on domestic resource mobilization: (e.g. user fees). Strong Civil Society engagement contributed to a lot to the WASH Sector achieving this progress.
- Specific financing mechanisms that address the progressive elimination of inequalities
- License and tariff collection by WASH ministries and agencies
- Regular inspections of WASH institutions
- Donors support to specific program and activities

6. Country priorities and commitments

Highlights of country targets for the water, sanitation and hygiene targets of the SDGs

- By 2023, A total of 85% of Liberians will have access to basic water supply system in rural areas.
- 15% access to safely managed water point
- 25% access to basic sanitation
- 100% of communities open defecation free
- 100% district WASH Plans approved
- 50% human capacity in WASH settled
- Develop a national WASH data and information management system with credible baseline on WASH including solid waste management
- Develop and implement CLTS Roadmap to achieve ODF status
- 15% access to safely manage sanitation

Three to five priorities for the next 3-5 years - identified through a government-led process, and drawn from the national plan

- Increase 85% access to equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply to the population of rural communities and small towns in Liberia.
- Eliminate open defecation nationwide and to provide a minimum standard WASH package to 100% of the population.
- Build institutional capacity of government and CSOs at national, county and district levels, as well as for rural communities to mainstream Climate Change in WASH programs
- Mobilize domestic and external resources and support community leaders/members to participate fully in project planning and decision making, assuming responsibility for 100% of Operation & Maintenance (O&M) for WASH facilities
- Establish a system to manage WASH data collection, analyses and dissemination to support policy development, planning, implementation and decision making, as well as ensure annual JSR

Commitments the government is tabling to achieve the priorities

- Allocate 5 million dollars annually in the public sector investment plan for WASH activities
- Establish Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation by 2025
- Ensure to send 50 WASH staff and students for international masters annually
- Ensure that data collection tools and instruments are harmonized and integrated to include characteristics of inequality

National and sector processes which will be used to review progress

- Joint Sector Review- Done Annually
- WASH Sector Quarterly Reporting Exercise- Done every three months
- Midyear reviews Report- every six months
- Status of WASH Liberia Report- Annually
- MAM in-country assessment- Annually
- CSOs Sector Tracking Report – Quarterly

Possible barriers towards the achievement of the commitments and approaches to overcoming them

- Limited human capital to drive technical and policy level visions
- Low Community Ownership of operation & maintenance responsibilities
- Limited funding for sector priorities
- Limited high level political will
- limited understanding of broader sector issues among actors'
- Low operational capacity to drive new agencies/governance institutions

Processes and materials used in the preparation of the Brief

- Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018)
- Liberia Sector Performance Report 2018

- Infrastructure and Basic Services Pillar- Sector Overview & Strategy Template
- Liberia One WASH Program 2018
- Water Point mapping Report 2017
- JMP Factsheet 2021
- SWA MAM in-Country assessment
- WASH Commission Strategic Plan 2020-2025
- Liberia Ending Open Defecation Road Map 2020-2025

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