The Country Briefs were prepared by governments ahead of the SWA 2019 Sector Ministers’ Meeting. They are a snap-shot of the country’s current state in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene, and future targets.

1. Background

- **Major political, economic, governance trends, as well as most acute challenges such as climate change, fragility, conflict, exclusion or poverty.**

Water is an important resource for Lesotho and the country is situated at head waters of the four Southern African riparian states. Lesotho transfer water to the Republic of South Africa and generates hydropower through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) and phase II of the development of the LHWP has being initiated. The water sector is rapidly expanding the infrastructure in the lowlands to satisfy the domestic, commercial and industrial demand in the towns and villages.

The water catchments in Lesotho are under pressure due to poor land management resulting in widespread land degradation and soil erosion. A large proportion of Lesotho’s population remains without access to proper water and sanitation services. The Government developed the Long-Term Water and Sanitation Strategy (LTS) to guide the implementation of the LWSP and the Water Act. The LTS was gazetted in 2016. The LTS describes the actions in a proposed Water Sector (WS) Programme until 2030 under 6 Key Focus Areas (KFAs) with the Strategic Aims and Activities under each KFA to reach the goals. The KFAs are: KFA1: Establishment of Catchment Management, KFA II: Climate Change, Water Resources and Environmental Management, KFA III: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, KFA IV: Regulated Water and Sewerage Services, KFA V: Water Resource Development and KFA VI: Sector Resource Planning, Coordination and M&E

In particular, KFA III – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; and KFA VI – Sector Resource Planning, Coordination and M&E; provide the strategic framework and guidance for addressing challenges in achieving the WASH-related targets of the SDGs and inequalities in access to WASH services.

2. SDGs and the water, sanitation and hygiene sector

- **Status of the sector in terms of the baseline for the SDGs, progress achieved since the SDGs were announced**
The present statistics on access to WASH services are based on the regular surveys by the Bureau of Statistics, in particular the 2016 Population Census Survey (done every 10 years), the Demographic and Health Surveys (every 5 years) and the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey (CMS) (annual). Although the WASH indicators used for the 2016 Population Census were not defined according to the SDG definitions\(^1\), analysis of the data on type of connection and collection time for households shows:

- **Water**: 34% of the population had access to water on site in 2016 with big differences between urban and rural areas: urban: 71%; peri-urban: 38%; rural 5%.
- **Sanitation**: access in 2016 to basic sanitation (not-shared) is 44% with urban: 56%; 43% peri-urban and rural: 34%. There are no up-to-date statistics on 2019 access to sanitation.

There is no data available on the combined access to water, sanitation and hand washing in households, schools and clinics.

- **Results of sector analysis or evaluations undertaken to review SDG 6**

A comprehensive sector analysis on the road-map towards achieving SDG 6 has not been carried out. At the general level there is consensus that Lesotho strives to achieve the SDGs including the aims of 'leaving no-one behind' however plans for how to achieve this are still to be developed. The goal for Lesotho is likely to be combination of access to safely managed services for a proportion of the population, in particular in urban and rural areas and full access to basic services in all areas.

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

The challenges for attaining the targets are multiple: the level of poverty in Lesotho necessitates a high level of government subsidies for investments in WASH services. The ability and willingness to pay for higher service levels implied in the ‘safely managed services’ is likely to be a constraint.

Lesotho is implementing a decentralisation process and the Local Councils are envisaged to play an important role in WASH services. The present capacity of the Local Councils to deliver services is a challenge. The water sector institutions also need to develop capacity for effective deliver of the services, national level planning, financing, regulation and coordination roles.

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\(^1\) The figures for access to water services only consider type of connection and collection time. Data on 24-hour supply and water quality are not considered.
• **Main national processes / actions being undertaken to strengthen sector and make progress towards SDG 6**

Lesotho Government has put in place the Lesotho Water and Sanitation Policy (LWSP) 2007 and the Water Act of 2008. The Government has initiated a process for formulation of a Water and Sanitation Services Bill to complement the Water Act of 2008 that focuses mainly on water resources management. The Government developed the Long-Term Water and Sanitation Strategy (LTS) to guide the implementation of the LWSP and the Water Act. The LTS was gazetted in 2017. The LTS describes the actions in a proposed Water Sector (WS) Programme until 2030.

A combined programme for reaching the SDG 6 targets for households, clinics and schools is yet to be developed.

3. **Collaborative Behaviours, Building Blocks and Guiding Principles**

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

The water sector has established sector coordination mechanisms between the Government WASH Ministries, Departments and UN agencies, development partners and civil society through quarterly coordination meetings and annual reviews. Improvements are needed to improve the effectiveness of the collaboration and coordinated planning in the sector.

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

The Ministry of Social Development is presently establishing data bases on the vulnerable households and the water sector is still to develop the M&E systems to provide data on WASH access for all groups.

To address the inequalities in Urban and Rural areas the Government is implementing two sanitation projects targeted the most vulnerable population. (LRWSSP & MWWP)

• **How have the Guiding Principles been implemented while taking into account the commitment to progressively eliminate inequalities.**

There is not yet a comprehensive plan for eliminating inequalities in WASH access. The Ministry of Water is implementing pilot projects on design of sanitation facilities that allow for access for disabled persons in institutions and households and for hand-washing facilities and menstrual hygiene. These pilot projects will guide the strategy for how to implement this in a comprehensive manner for all institutions and for vulnerable households.
4. Eliminating Inequalities

- **Extent and nature of inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene;**

  There are challenges for access to water in rural areas of Lesotho and huge challenges for access to sanitation and hygiene. The challenge is more on remote difficult areas to reach. The underserved population is due to declining source yield, alternative sources are expensive since most of them involve abstraction of surface water. In urban areas the affordability is a major challenge for accessing water and sanitation services. A comprehensive multi-sectoral action plan on sanitation and hygiene would be needed to start the country on a path towards achieving SDG 6.2.

- **Collection of data on inequalities, its causes and identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups;**

  The Ministry of Social Development is establishing data on vulnerable households and the Bureau of Statistics have general statistics on disabilities and income. This data is not yet integrated into the M&E systems in the water sector generally; however, for rural WASH, a comprehensive M&E system will be operationalised in 2019 that is envisaged to include data and utilise the definitions on the WASH SDGs.

- **Gaps in the understanding of inequalities in the sector;**

  Apart from the geographical inequalities with much higher access in urban than in rural areas, there is presently no data on the inequalities in WASH access for vulnerable households and persons with disabilities.

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

  The bottleneck analysis done in 2018 highlighted the high priorities activities based on detailed analysis for subsectors of WASH in Schools, rural sanitation and hygiene, urban sanitation and hygiene and rural water. In addition the GLAAS 2018/19 survey focuses on national policies, plans and targets required for SDG monitoring.

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

  The Ministry of Development planning has developed the National Baseline report on SDGs which is yet to be disseminated. Moreover the country is in the process of developing The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II)

- **Progress made on progressively eliminating inequalities; Related to above point.**
• **Main targets of the country in terms of eliminating inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene.**

At a general level the Government aims at fully eliminating inequalities in access to WASH services. This will have to include the differences in access in urban/peri-urban/rural areas and the challenges in terms of affordability for poor households and access for people with disabilities.

• **Specific laws, policy and regulations for addressing inequalities.**

The Government is reviewing the legal framework for WASH services and a new Water Services Bill would need to include measures for addressing inequalities

5. **Water, sanitation and hygiene Financing**

• **Estimate of funding needs to progressively eliminate inequalities**

The funding needs for eliminating inequalities have not been established

• **Magnitude of funding deficit for SDG6**

Strategic Investment planning for rural and peri-urban areas indicate that approximately 300 mUSD² is needed to invest in WASH to reach the SDG6 targets. In addition to this, Lesotho needs to invest about 650 mUSD³ in bulk water supplies. Very substantial investments will also be needed in urban areas in improving water services to the level of safely managed services and in particular in sewerage and sanitation investments.

• **Approaches to close the gap (innovative, new financing mechanisms and effective use of existing resources)**

investments in alternative and more sustainable water sources will be needed. The Government is addressing this in the lowlands by connecting villages to the bulk water supply transmission networks, however other solutions are required for the remote villages in the foothills and mountain areas.

The Ministry of Water is presently implementing improved data management and planning systems for rural WASH and this will need to be expanded to cover all WASH investments to ensure effective use of the scarce resources for investments in WASH services.

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² Concept Note for RWS Project, Ministry of Water, November 2018
³ The Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme - Draft Implementation Programme – Project Packages (D7), August 2017.
The Ministry is also working towards developing a cost-effective sanitation strategy with a mix of government subsidies for vulnerable households and owner financed investments for households that can afford the sanitation facilities. This would need to include a multi-sectoral comprehensive hygiene and sanitation promotion programme involving the Ministries of Health, Social Development, and Education as well as support and promotion from the highest level of political leadership.

- **Progress made (success of the above approaches)**
  
  No substantial progress yet

- **Specific financing mechanisms that address the progressive elimination of inequalities**
  
  No specific mechanisms developed yet except the acceptance that a continuation of the Government subsidies for household sanitation is needed for vulnerable households.

6. **Country priorities and commitments**

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

  The specific targets for Lesotho for SDG 6.1 and 6.2 for access to safely managed services for some and full access to basic services are still to be agreed.

  It is likely that the targets for SDG 6.1 will be 100% access to safely managed services in urban areas, a lower proportion in peri-urban areas, possibly around 50%; and a small proportion in rural areas, possibly around 20%.

  The targets for SDG 6.2 are likely to be much lower due to the large gap in access to sanitation and hygiene and the need for a multi-sectoral comprehensive sanitation and hygiene promotion programme as well as large investments in environmentally safe and financially sustainable sewerage services in urban areas.

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

  - Implement lowlands bulk water supply projects, the scheme is aimed at supplying water and sanitation to more than 50% of the rural population
  - Implementation of the RWS Investment projects that addresses water and sanitation in rural and peri-urban communities including the areas covered by the bulk water transmission mains.
  - Formulation and start of implementation of a comprehensive sanitation and hygiene programme that fully addresses inequalities
  - Finalise Rural Sanitation Strategy and Investment
  - Finalise Water and Sanitation Service Bill
- Finalise and implement comprehensive M&E system to start operating in 2019 that is envisaged to include data utilising the definitions on the WASH SDGs.

- **Commitments the government is tabling to achieve the priorities**
  - Increased funding to the water sector. 2019/20 budget vs 2018/19
  - Initiate advocacy for action on issues of open defecation and poor hygiene in the country.

- **Commitments tabled by development partners (cooperating partners, civil society, private sector, and research and learning agencies)**

  Collaboration mechanisms in working with the development partners. There are substantial technical and financial support programmes from the EU, World Bank, African Development Bank, GIZ, UNICEF ...etc as well as NGOs.

  The National University is in the process of establishing a Water Institute and an Engineering Department. This will substantially improve the education in WASH related aspects and availability of new staff for the Government, NGOs and Private Sector for improved WASH delivery.

- **Roadmap for achieving the commitments and the priorities, particularly those elements addressing inequalities**

  The road map is yet to be developed.

7. **Mechanisms for review and follow-up on the priorities and commitments**

- **National and sector processes which will be used to review progress**

  The existing WASH sector Coordination and Annual Review mechanisms would be used to follow-up on the commitments to address the inequalities.

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

  The impact of climate change has negatively affected the shallow groundwater spring sources that in the past has been the source of water for 70% of the rural population, thus imposing a huge barrier in achieving commitments. The government is now engaging in the construction of multipurpose dams for water security ad that requires more investment to achieve these purpose. Fully addressing of the inequalities in access to sanitation and hygiene will need commitment and drive from the highest level of Government – administratively, economic stability and politically as well as stable funding.
8. Processes and materials used in the preparation of the Brief

- **Main material, e.g. country monitoring data, sector progress reports, JSR undertakings/action points GLAAS, JMP reports, SWA Collaborative Behaviours Country Profile**

The existing data from the Bureau of Statistics that is also the basis for Lesotho’s reporting to the JMP and the GLAAS. Knowledge of the government plans and priorities

- **Inter-Ministry working groups/meetings, involved in the preparation of the Brief**

Inter-ministerial and WASH Sector coordination members were involved in the preparation of the brief.

9. Contacts

- **Main contacts for further information**

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