

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



The Liberia COUNTRY BRIEF

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. COUNTRY CONTEXT

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

Liberia recently experienced a change of the political order following peaceful elections in late 2017. With this passing of the national baton of duty also came the modification of new actors in literally every aspects of the country's political, economic, and social fabric. According to the national development blueprint, the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018, Liberia is severely underdeveloped because the human and knowledge capital have not been developed to productively and sustainably exploit the natural resources and produce wealth. The document observes that while the Government of Liberia acknowledges that progress has been made with the support of development partners on key national aggregate indicators over the past 12 years; such as per capita income growth, the Human Development Index (HDI), life expectancy at birth, and mean years of schooling, these gains have not been universal and sustainable. It asserts that additionally, when inequality measurements are introduced, the adjusted HDI shows a loss of 33.4 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the basic indicators of development. The PAPD further posits that the average loss for Sub-Saharan Africa is 32.2 percent over the same period. On the inequality adjusted and the gender HDI, Liberia falls among the 10 most unequal countries.

With most Liberians facing some form of income and/or food insecurity and vulnerability within 14 of the 15 regions of the country, the PAPD observes that absolute poverty levels started to have been on the rise since 2014. The Government of Liberia sees pervasive poverty, inequality, and widespread deprivation as the greatest restraint to sustaining the peace and accelerating growth and sustainable development.

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:

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



Nearly the entire population of Liberia currently lacks access to safely managed WASH as targeted by the SDGs according to the WASH Sector Performance Report 2018 (SPR).

According to the SPR 2018, based on current trends, Liberia is nowhere close to attaining the recently developed WASH SDGs by 2030. It advances the claim that while comprehensive nationwide data for all aspects of the SDG defined “safely managed” water and sanitation access is not yet available, partial and preliminary information clearly shows the more ambitious “safely managed” access to be very low. The documents note that “For example, while improved water access is above 70%, improved access on-premises (just one of the “safely managed” conditions) is only 7%. Adding other safely managed conditions such as water quality and given the reports of high levels water quality contamination in Monrovia, “safely managed water” may be rarer still.” This analysis also holds true for sanitation. This is supported by the JMP 2017 data which indicates that 97% of the population has no facilities for hand washing, as per the newly defined SDG indicators.

The SPR documents that “in Liberia while access to improved water sources has risen from 62.4% in 2000 to 76.5% in 2015 nationally, less than 4% of Liberians benefit from piped water and only 17% of the population has access to improved sanitation (WHO and UNICEF, 2017).” It is needless to indicate that the country missed its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for improved water and sanitation access in 2015. The current trends do not also seem very promising.

Results of sector analysis or evaluations undertaken to review SDG 6

The SPR which documents the sector progress and challenges, posits that *“while improved water access is above 70%, improved access on-premises (just one of the “safely managed” conditions) is only 7%.”*

3. National vision for the sector:

According to the PAPD (2018-2023), the government aims to have equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply and sanitation services for all Liberians. The government has established the WASH Commission and will mobilize resources for water supply infrastructure including

- Provide rural water supply,
- Facilitate supply and financing for water resources management,
- Mobilize communities to fully participate in the planning, operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, and Eliminate open defecation nationwide while enforcing minimum standard WASH packages.
- Improve WASH management information systems

4. 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:

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



- By 2023, a total of 85% of Liberians will have access to water supply system in rural areas. This will lead to a decrease of water borne diseases in children, the elderly and the active labour force, subsequently leading to increased productivity.
- By 2023, 80% of the poor rural dwellers have their own toilet facilities and are disposing of waste in safe and sustainable manner.

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

Low/Limited National Funding: According to the Liberia Sector Performance Report (2017), to achieve the SDGs, Liberia must spend five times more than today. This is because the WASH sector in Liberia is excessively dependent on external aid: Between FY2015-18, nearly 96 percent of total sector funding was provided by Donors. The national budget contribution made up merely 4.3 percent of the total sector allocation, with the balance met through donor funding. During this period, the share of national funds to the WASH sector has been declining.

Critical institutional gaps remain: A national regulator known as the National WASH Commission has been established with extremely low operational capacity. Liberia still however needs a dedicated Water Ministry to drive coordinated WASH service 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
- Increased engagement and operationalization of the WASH legislative caucus and the National Water Resource and Sanitation Board.

6. 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 the SWA Collaborative Behaviors, and working together effectively to ensure sustainable and equitable access to WASH

- Coordination has improved greatly and Liberia currently seeks to improve mutual accountability by introducing a One WASH Plan this year as the singular blueprint of sector interventions. The ONE

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



WASH program leads on the efforts of mutual planning and program implementation within the WASH sector.

- However considering achievement, a framework has not yet been developed at country level on how progress on the implementation of the MAM can be measured or tracked. Key indicators of success are yet to be defined.

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 strategy 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.

How have the Guiding Principles been implemented while taking into account the commitment to progressively eliminate inequalities? Check JMP!!!

7. Eliminating Inequalities

- Extent and nature of inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene; **Actual data unknown and there is no visibility of any progress made.**
- 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 intersectionalities 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 and is responsible for the lack of consciousness in capturing and taking action on such data sets.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- Main targets of the country in terms of eliminating inequalities in water, sanitation and hygiene; **This is under development**
- Specific laws, policy and regulations for addressing inequalities. **This is under development**

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



8. Water, sanitation and hygiene Financing

- Estimate of funding needs to progressively eliminate inequalities : **201 USD million annually**
- 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) : **Strategies are under development**
- Progress made (success of the above approaches) : **None to report at the moment**
- Specific financing mechanisms that address the progressive elimination of inequalities

9. 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 water supply system in rural areas.
- By 2023, 90% of water systems are sustainably managed by rural inhabitants who are independently ensuring that the systems are providing water all year round.
- By 2023, 80% of the poor rural dwellers have their own toilet facilities and are disposing of waste in safe and sustainable manner
- BY 2023, national 100% of national level staff, county WASH teams and community WASH teams have the capacity to ensure effective management and implementation of the program and projects.

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

- Increase access to equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply to facilities 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 at national, county and district levels, as well as for rural communities
- Mobilize 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

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 2023
- Ensure to send 50 WASH staff and students for international masters annually

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



- Ensure that data collection tools and instruments are harmonies and integrated to include characteristics of inequality

Mechanisms for review and follow-up on the priorities and commitments

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

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

- Lack of human capital to drive technical and policy level vision
- Low Community Ownership of O/M responsibilities
- Unavailable funding for sector priorities
- Limited political will
- Misunderstanding of broader sector issues due to low intellectual capital and the existence of required technical skills
- Low operational capacity to drive new agencies/governance institutions

Processes and materials used in the preparation of the Brief

- GLASS Questionnaire (2018)
- 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 2018

10. Contacts

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SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April

