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Liberia

Gov Constraints to Service Delivery

WASH OVERVIEW NOTE

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GOV



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LIBERIA WASH SECTOR: GOVERNANCE, FINANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

I. CONTEXT

1. **Liberia's Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) sector faces chronic structural problems, which have become more challenging since it was not the primary focus of the post-conflict emergency response by development partners.** The wartime destruction of infrastructure and the urgency behind rebuilding post conflict, led donors as well as Liberia's own Ministry of Finance to directly fund reconstruction and development through non-state actors (such as NGOs, CSOs and development partners) rather than state institutions (World Bank, 2015). Consequently, this has weakened the institutional capacity of the sector to absorb finance and turn it into productive services, thus further inhibiting investment. This was further aggravated by the Liberian government's immediate post war challenges, which were given greater priority such as roads and electricity. Other sectors, such as health, were funded through the country's national budget, which became a point of leverage to influence institutional capacity. The WASH sector however, was left in the hands of non-state entities.

2. **The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) recognizes the need for improving WASH conditions in the country.** The PAPD is a Government of Liberia (GoL)'s medium-term development strategy covering 2018-2023 that aligns itself with the national strategic vision – 'Liberia Rising 2030'¹. The PAPD has recognized the lack of financing for infrastructure investments as a key constraint that has hindered the improvement in water supply, sanitation, waste disposal, and drainage. Other constraints include limited human resources, institutional fragmentation, a weak legal and regulatory framework, inadequate water distribution infrastructure due to lack of funding, inadequate sanitation services, poor data, lack of trained manpower and behavioral change resistance from communities.

3. **Although existing data remains weak, poor access to WASH remains a critical concern.** Between 2000 and 2015, due to rapid population growth, the absolute number of Liberians without access to improved water has risen by approximately 118,000 people, even as the access rate has edged up - from 68 percent in 2000 to 77 percent in 2015. Liberia marginally increased sanitation access since the end of the civil war, rising from barely 14 percent to just below 17 percent in 2015. Open defecation is extremely widespread and much higher than the Sub-Saharan African average. Data from the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) indicates that 97 percent of the population has no facilities for hand washing.

4. **Access to improved water is significantly lower in rural areas (63.7 percent) compared to cities (89.5 percent)** (WHO and UNICEF, 2017). In rural areas, nearly 62 percent of rural households rely mainly on hand pumps, tube wells or boreholes for drinking water (DHS, 2016). Additionally, 80 percent of those in rural households travel less than 30 minutes to fetch drinking water (DHS, 2016). Improved sanitation access stands at 26 percent in cities and 4 percent in rural areas (DHS, 2016). Rural sanitation infrastructure is extremely limited and has stagnated with barely a 2 percent increase since 2000 (WHO and UNICEF, 2017). Such facilities reduce the transmission of cholera, typhoid, and other diseases. These low rates of access are a reflection of the investments being made in rural water supplies.

5. **In Liberia, "Safely Managed" access as defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is presently much lower than "Improved" access.** While comprehensive nationwide data for all aspects of "safely managed" water and sanitation access are not yet available (for instance on water quality or continuity of supply), partial and preliminary information clearly shows the more ambitious "safely managed" access to be very low. For example, while improved water access is above 70 percent, improved access on-premises (just one of the "safely managed" conditions) is only 7 percent. Given that water quality data from Monrovia suggest widespread contamination of water sources, "safely managed" water may be rarer still. Similarly, "safely managed" sanitation is likely even lower than the already extremely low 17 percent improved access.

¹ The Liberia Rising 2030 national plan is designed to enable Liberia to achieve middle-income country (MIC) status by 2030 through peaceful and inclusive politics, stable institutions, economic diversification, and accelerated human capital formation.

For example, only 1 percent of the population currently has a handwashing facility at home with soap and water as targeted by the SDGs (WHO and UNICEF, 2015). There are also no regulated safe disposal sites for fecal matter. In other words, virtually the entire population of Liberia currently lacks access to safely managed WASH as targeted by the SDGs.

Box 1. WASH Sector Policies and Institutions

WASH sector policies have provided strategic direction of the WASH Sector in Liberia. **Water Supply and Sanitation Policy 2009** set out institutional arrangements and policies in delivering WASH services. **The WASH Compact 2011**, signed by the President, set out a roadmap of themes based on four key commitments and related cross cutting issues. The need to improve sector financing was one of the commitments. **WASH Sector Strategic Plan 2012-2017** provided detailed guidance to the institutional responsibilities and strategies for implementing the ‘WASH Compact’ and the sector policies. GoL prepared **WASH Sector Investment Plan (SIP) 2012-2017** that provided details on the investment plans to WASH activities for the five years, and **Sector Capacity Development Plan 2012-2017** put together areas needed for capacity development based on the findings on needs assessment in WASH. In addition, GoL organized **WASH Joint Sector Review (JSR)** in 2013, 2014, 2015, and the most recently in 2018 and prepared **WASH Sector Performance Report** to take stock of sector institutions, achievements, key challenges, and actions going forward. After these policies, the GoL launched the **One WASH Program** in 2018 with the aim of modernizing the way WASH services are delivered to the communities in Liberia, and thereby contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. The One WASH Program provided a platform for single annual work plan, annual budget, information system, monitoring and evaluation system, and reporting system. The program was coordinated by the National WASH Coordination Committee Secretariat, which are supported by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Land and Mines, and Ministry of Education.

As envisioned in 2009 Water Supply and Sanitation Policy, the National Water Resources and Sanitation Board (NWRSB) was established in 2015. NWRSB was given the mandate to coordinate multi-ministries relating to WASH, oversee legislation and policy implementation. The NWRSB’s coordination role is supported by the National Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Committee (NWSHPC), which is administered by the Ministry of Public Works. It also oversees the facilitation and regulatory agencies as well as the service delivery agencies.

6. **WASH sector² activities are spread across multiple ministries and agencies and the country lacks a WASH champion, especially for rural areas.** The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) is in charge of the rural water agenda and non-piped water related infrastructure in urban areas, Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation (LWSC) provides urban water and sewer services, Ministry of Education (MoE) provides health, water and hygiene in education institutions, Ministry of Health (MoH) provides basic water, sanitation and hygiene services through health facilities, and Municipal Governments such as Monrovia and Paynesville City Corporations provide solid waste management services (see Table 1). On the other hand, water related issues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Land and Mines are considered in the subsector of ‘Water Resources’ rather than WASH activities. The multiplicity of WASH activities and wide functional responsibilities in various ministries and agencies have left GoL with no ministries playing a leading role in WASH. In 2018, a WASH commission was established to take on the regulatory function of the WASH sector. However, it is gradually taking on more of a service delivery role across the WASH Sector.

Table 1. The WASH functions in ministries and agencies

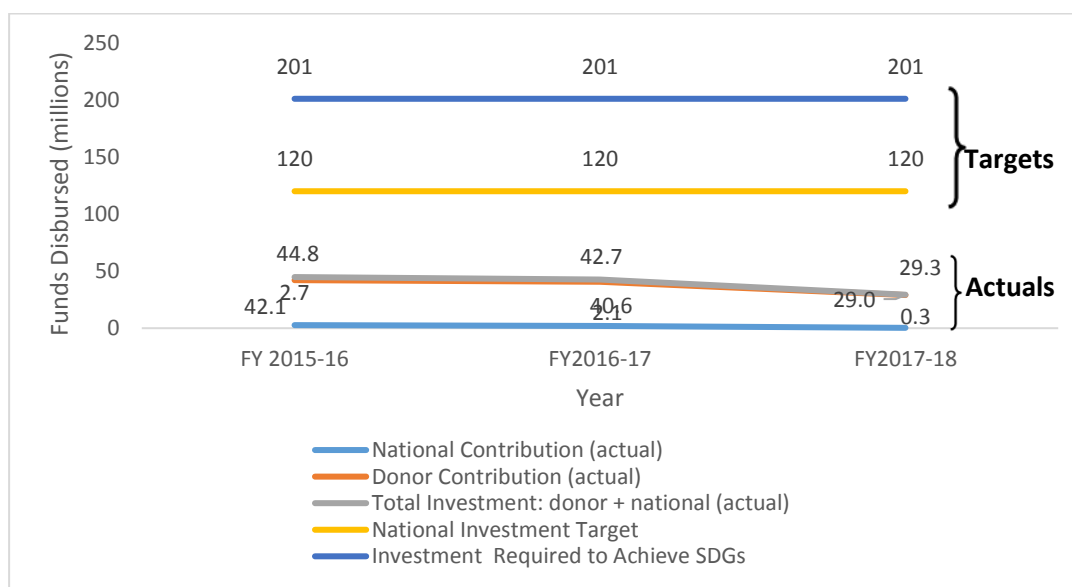
Ministry/Agency	WASH Activities
Ministry of Public Works (MPW)	Non-piped water-related infrastructure in urban areas, Rural WASH
Liberia Water and Sewage Corporation (LWSC)	Urban WASH, mainly urban water supply and sewage

² WASH includes i) piped water services, sewerage system, toilets and waste management system in urban areas (Urban WASH), ii) wells, boreholes and springs and sludge treatment in rural areas (Rural WASH), iii) sanitation and hygiene education at schools, health facilities and communities (WASH in Heath and Schools), and iv) solid waste management at local government.

Ministry of Education (MoE)	WASH in Schools and education
Ministry of Health (MoH)	WASH in Health, sanitation and hygiene
Municipal Government (such as Monrovia City Corporation)	Solid Waste Management
Ministry of Agriculture	Not WASH. Activities are considered under 'Water Resources'
Ministry of Land and Mines	
Monrovia City Corporation (MCC)	Urban Solid Waste Management

7. **Government financial allocation to WASH is alarmingly low, although the PAPD addresses the critical need for WASH improvements by indicating that “the Government aims to have equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply and sanitation services for all Liberians.”**³ Recent estimates made by WASH Sector Performance Report suggest that Liberia must spend five times more than it does today or invest US\$ 201 million per year (2015 prices) to achieve SDG 6.1 “Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services” and SDG 6.2 “Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand washing facility with soap and water” by 2030. Liberia’s WASH Sector Investment Plan estimated funding needs for the period FY2012-17 of approximately US\$596 million or US\$120 million per year for the five years to stay on track for the access targets set by the Government WASH policies⁴. However, between FY 2015-16 and FY2016-17,⁵ annual allocation for WASH sector, including both GoL and donor funds, was 44.8 million and 42.7 million respectively, or only 22 percent of what was required to meet the targets (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. National and SDG targets for Liberia v/s Actual Investments (Annual): FY2015-18



Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

8. **Due to the limited amount allocated from the national budget, WASH activities are mainly financed by development partners.** Between FY2015-18, national contributions to WASH activities accounted for less than 6 percent of the total amount, while more than 94 percent was financed through funds from development partners. Over the three years, share of development partners’ contributions have increased from 94 percent in FY2015-16 to 99 percent in FY2017-18 while the share of GoL contributions declined from

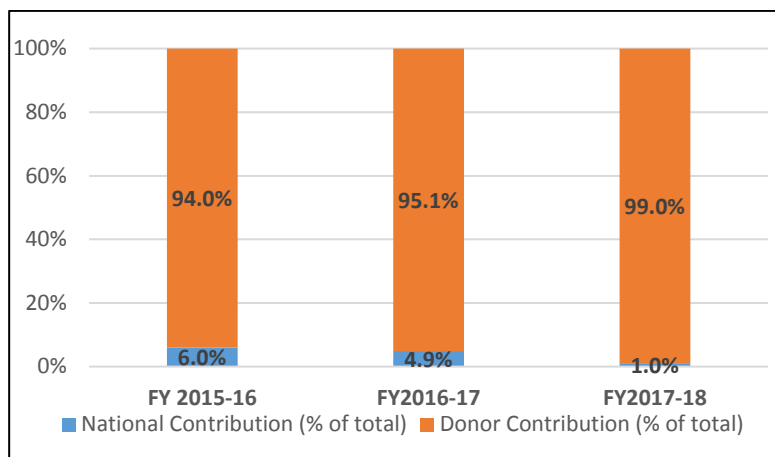
³ The Government has also committed that it “will mobilize resources for water supply infrastructure, provide rural water supply, facilitate supply and financing for water resources management, mobilize communities to fully participate in planning, operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, and eliminate open defecation nationwide while enforcing minimum standard WASH packages”.

⁴ Ministry of Public Works 2013, p.13

⁵ Based on data for approved projections and actual disbursements in FY2015-16 and FY2016-17 from GoL and development partners, while data for FY2017-18 accounts for disbursements as of Quarter II of FY2017-18.

6.0 percent to 1.0 percent (see Figure 3). Most of development partners' contributions are financed through the form of a 'project', which can be either recorded in the budget or provided directly to the communities outside of the budget. The GoL's national budget is committed as counterpart funds for donor projects instead of financing government-led capital investments and maintenance of investments. The major development partners by the funding amount include UNICEF (35 percent), AfDB (25 percent), USAID (24 percent), World Bank (9 percent) and EU (5 percent).

Figure 3: National v/s Donor Contributions to WASH Sector (FY2015-18)



Source: Project Investment Unit – Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

9. **The role of the private sector is limited to the urban areas.** The government has been unable to attract private sector participation in rural areas due to the absence of a clearly defined policy, dearth of opportunities available and the lack of a regulator. The private sector is mainly engaged in commercial water production, the sale of portable drinking water, garbage collection and sewage trucking activities, which is generally restricted to urban areas (Ministry of Public works, 2018). In Monrovia, primary solid waste collection (door-to-door) is conducted through agreements with Community Based Enterprises (CBEs) while secondary waste collection is taken over by private contractors and the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC).

10. **Among available funds, Urban WASH received the most, while Rural WASH received the smallest amount of funds in the WASH sub-sector.** There are many interventions by development partners (World Bank, USAID, AfDB) that focus on urban piped water supply. In FY2015-18, the funds disbursed to Urban WASH dominate as 51.1 percent of the total WASH sector funds which is approximately US\$56 million. This is followed by WASH in Health Facilities and Schools as 40.3 percent of sector funds or US\$47 million, where all funds come from development partners. Solid waste management is at 6.9 percent or US\$8 million mostly targeting Monrovia City Corporation. On the other hand, rural WASH is poorly funded both from national budget and development partners and only constitute 0.1 percent of total WASH funding and received US\$0.1 million over the three years. Rural WASH funds were allocated towards construction of new water points, rehabilitation of existing waterpoints, procurement of borehole drilling equipment and logistics and community programs. FY 2017-18 saw no disbursements for rural WASH.

11. **The accreditation processes for local and foreign NGOs as well as development partners remain overly bureaucratic and not well communicated. Thus, these non-state actors tend to bypass the system and directly start implementing projects.** Non-state actors have been the main funders and installers of rural water point infrastructure, but a lengthy and expensive accreditation process remains a key disincentive. Currently, there are subnational WASH teams comprising designated MPW WASH coordinators in each county chairing WASH meetings in collaboration with health and other line ministries. Unfortunately, not all WASH partners participate in these meetings.

12. **Rural WASH teams are under resourced with inadequate staff numbers and limited capacity at national and subnational level.** Fiscal decentralization in Liberia is incomplete, making it difficult to transfer funds from central government to counties. Since 2010, the GoL started shifting responsibilities to counties, and the Local Government Act was promulgated in 2018. However, WASH responsibilities undertaken by the

counties have not been articulated in the Act or subsequent guidelines. An intergovernmental fiscal transfer system is yet to be developed. WASH activities have continued to be budgeted through central government ministries such as MPW, MOH, MOE except solid waste management where budget is allocated to municipal governments.

13. **Coordination issues remain paramount.** WASH financing and activities are not fully coordinated within line ministries at the national and county level and sometimes between line ministries and county officials, as well as within development partners, and between development partners and government. This is mainly due to the disjointed nature of WASH-related activities, and lack of WASH champion at the national level that can play a strong coordination role.

14. **The disjointed nature of WASH-related activities has made the tracking of budget allocation and disbursement extremely difficult.** Given that WASH is not a “sector” in the budget classification, WASH related activities are spread across respective spending entities in respective “sectors”. For example, WASH activities in the MPW are classified under “infrastructure and basic services” while MoE and MoH WASH activities are in “education” and “health” sectors. Such disjointed nature of WASH activities has made it difficult to track and consolidate all the WASH activities, its budget allocation and actual disbursement.

15. **Government budgets can be directly linked to donor financed projects, as currently is the case for annual budget earmarked for solid waste management to the MCC.** Moreover, solid waste management still remains grossly underfunded in the national budget. From 2015-18 all budgetary allocation towards solid waste management came solely from counterpart funding linked to World Bank projects - Emergency Monrovia Urban Sanitation Project (2009-2016) and the ongoing Cheesemanburg Landfill Urban Sanitation Project. MCC also collects small fees paid by small contractors for tipping at the transfer stations and the landfill, from businesses operating within the city limits, and from CBEs that provide the primary collection services to the residents in Monrovia.

16. **The urban solid waste sector, concentrated around the capital region, faces high costs and difficulties in waste collection.** Current weaknesses in waste management generated by households and business has resulted in the accumulation of a significant amount of uncollected and haphazardly disposed solid waste in the city. According to the most recent tonnage data, the waste collection rate in the city of Monrovia was approximately 800 tons of domestic solid waste per day, representing approximately 45 % of the total waste generated in the city. The remainder approximately 55 % is not covered by the formal solid waste collection system.

17. **Inefficiencies existing within the Contractual Model with CBEs effect primary waste collection, while the MCC is overburdened with the operation and supervision of secondary waste collection in a context of very limited resources.** CBEs are currently unable to leverage efficiencies of scaling up, but incur huge overhead costs and generate low revenue, since the number of households they serve remains constant and fee collection from citizens remain weakly enforced. While in 2015 and 2016, private contractors were used for secondary waste collection, in 2017, the MCC through a GoL funded intervention exclusively provided solid waste management services. However, the lack of adequate budgetary support and alternate financial resources for the MCC has restricted capacity to provide services.

18. **Communications with citizens across the WASH sector remains poor.** Based on limited qualitative research undertaken for this work,⁶ rural community members were generally aware of the existence of County WASH teams as well as the NGOs that construct their water points. However, very few people directly engage with WASH county teams and were not satisfied with service delivery. In Monrovia, the prevailing perceptions within urban households is that the cost of waste collection is already incurred in their taxes and therefore households remain reluctant to pay the fees to the CBEs needed to sustain the business model that CBEs depend upon. Therefore, weak communication around the difference between the garbage taxes

⁶ The team conducted focus group discussions with two communities in Gbarpolu and Grand Bassa counties, which revealed a mixed relationship between the county WASH teams and citizens. More details can be found in the policy note on rural WASH sector institutions

embedded in municipal taxes and the garbage fee charged by CBEs for actual services rendered is having a direct effect on the quality of the service.

II. IDENTIFYING PRIORITY AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

19. **Based on the country context and challenges identified in the WASH sector in Liberia, three priority areas are identified for attention.** Standalone policy notes further detail the context, challenges and recommendations relating to each of the following priority areas:

- WASH Sector Financing
- Rural WASH Institutions
- Solid Waste Management in urban Monrovia

20. **The recommendations in each note outline actionable steps that are, respectively, short-term and medium-term, in order move towards long-term reforms.** For each of the priority areas identified, the long-term vision and reforms proposed are as follows:

WASH Sector Financing

Liberia needs to increase WASH budget allocation, effectively integrate the WASH sector, and continue the dialogue with development partners.

Action plans and reforms include:

- **Strengthening the capacity of existing cross-ministerial coordination body** including National Water Resources and Sanitation Board (NWRSB) and the National Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Committee (NWSHPC). The NWRSB can potentially be a WASH champion in the Ministry of Finance. Thus, strengthening their coordination capacity is critical to bring all WASH related institutions and activities.
- Establishing a **comprehensive financing policy** for the WASH sector and better prioritizing future donor funds.
- Strengthening institutional capacity to manage public finance and coordinate development partners' fund for WASH activities.
- Considering the benefits **of a self-contained Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation** to manage a holistic integrated water related issues as a long-term objective.

Rural WASH Institutions

Rural WASH must develop clear roles and responsibilities of actors, enhance operational capacity and revise the accreditation process for NGOs.

Action plans and reforms include:

- Organizing a task force to **legally clarify roles & responsibilities** of different actors in rural WASH at the county level. This will feed into the implementation of Liberia's Local Government Act and sustain gains made towards decentralization reform in Liberia. In this decentralized context, clear delineation of functions, roles and responsibilities is crucial. Moreover, advocacy measures need to be added to elevate rural WASH on the political agenda.
- **Supporting CBEs and the private sector** for handpumps and spare parts by allowing other local hardware stores at the county level to stock hand pump spares in addition to their existing activities. Additionally, undertaking a survey/mini audit of current facilities, developing a package of equipment and logistics for each level of team, and rehabilitating offices for MPW at County level will help **boost operational capacity**.
- Reassessing and **simplifying the accreditation process** to allow NGOs to easily register their presence across counties and line ministries. Ideally accreditation should be a simplified, decentralized online e-process that is a one stop shop, that occurs every three years.

Solid Waste Management

Solid Waste Management in Monrovia needs to revisit its contractual agreements with community-based organizations and the private sector, improve operational capacity and strengthen communication with its citizens.

Action plans and reforms include:

- Developing a **Waste Management Strategy** to provide clear vision and direction for bringing in donor partners and private capital.
- Designing an **improved communications plan** to generate awareness among households on what the garbage tax is used for and who pays for it. Given that street cleaners sometimes illegally take over the role of waste collection from households to earn extra revenue, the MCC should take on a stronger role in promoting CBEs and outlining their role vis-a-vis that of street cleaners and scavengers.
- **Revamping the existing CBE model for primary waste collection.** This should include ways for CBEs to generate value added services such as: recycling, composting, and creating mini factories that can recycle plastic waste; adapt zoning laws to a new context of larger and formalized CBEs; include street cleaning & other end to end work in the model so that more revenues can be generated; and enhance competition among the CBEs by re-dividing the city in well-defined zones and tendering each zone where CBEs can compete for a price to provide the service.
- **Revisiting the Contractor model for secondary waste collection.** Currently, the MCC has taken over the implementation of secondary waste management activities. Given that the MCC is extremely financially constrained, it should revisit this model by hiring contractors based on experience and capacity, strengthening the supervisory and oversight role of the MCC to enforce accountability, enabling structures for contractors to access finance, and clarifying roles between service provision and financing. It should create a financial arrangement in which the private contractors focus on service delivery and the MCC monitors the quality of the services and effectiveness of allocated finances for secondary waste collection
- **Developing an output-based subsidy** and engaging with donor partners based on this model. This will help bridge the gap in costs required for delivering effective solid waste management services.

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