

Thematic area 2: Increasing political and financial commitment to systems strengthening

In March 2000, African leaders signed up to the African Water Vision 2025. A vision of an Africa where there is sustainable access to drinking water and sanitation services that are safe and adequate to meet the basic needs of all by 2025. This vision was introduced by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). This ambition was supported by substantial structural measures aimed at strengthening national and local water and sanitation systems:

- Mainstreaming full cost recovery and service differentiation, while ensuring safety nets for the poor
- Securing sustainable financing from national and international sources for tackling urgent water needs
- Securing sustainable financing for institutional reform
- Securing sustainable financing for information generation and management
- Promoting and facilitating private sector financing in the water sector.

In 2015, African leaders reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the original African Water Vision 2025 and at the same time provided an in-depth analysis to establish consistency between the 2030 SDG agenda and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

In an effort to stir up institutional reform in the sanitation sector, the Africa Sanitation Policy Guidelines (ASPG) were launched in June 2021. These are meant to institutionalise government commitments that have been captured in both international and regional commitments through the SDGs, Africa Water Vision and the N'gor Commitments.

After more than 20 years, these are still extremely relevant. Unfortunately, according to recent JMP data from the region, most countries on the continent are still significantly off track to achieve this vision and SDG 6.¹ Why? Is this due to a lack of political will, lack of sufficient financial commitments, and/or the translation of those political and financial commitments into concrete changes in WASH systems?

Political and financial commitments from national leadership are essential to achieve this Africa Water Vision and SDG 6. How do the political commitments made by national leadership at the regional level translate into changes in policies and financial commitments for sustainable WASH service delivery? When leadership chooses to prioritise WASH systems, provide the necessary financing and change the system, we see increases in access to WASH services.

Political commitment is widely seen as essential for accelerating progress because politicians 1) have the power to direct and redirect financial resources to the problem and 2) provide the leadership and direct widespread attention towards their priority issues, mobilising other public and private actors to contribute to the cause.

The thesis for this theme is that political commitment can lead to financial commitment and systems change but it does not always. There are specific factors that support the process for driving change.

1. www.unicef.org/wca/reports/progress-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-africa-2000-2020

To explore this thesis, the *Increasing Political and Financial Commitment to Systems Strengthening* theme is dedicated to

- exploring how political commitment can be attained, and what other actions and initiatives are required to ensure that political commitment is translated into political action and systems change
- identify what ignites political and financial commitment, including the role of personal interest, political pressure, demand from citizens, donor resources, etc.
- highlight the diverse actors that contribute to driving commitments and their implementation, including accountability once the commitments are being made.

The theme will bring together government, civil society and academia to share and learn from experiences from across the continent, including Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe.