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# WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

**The African Ministers'  
WASH Finance Brief**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) is a Pan-African Intergovernmental Organization, formed in 2002 in Abuja Nigeria to promote cooperation, security, social and economic development and poverty eradication among its Member States, by ensuring effective use and sustainable management of the continents' water resources, and provision of water supply, sanitation and hygiene services. AMCOW serves as the delivery mechanism on Water and Sanitation for the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union. AMCOW leads the political mobilization of stakeholders and the African Ministers for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for all the 55 African Member States to plan, advocate and influence for political prioritization of WASH services delivery across the African continent.

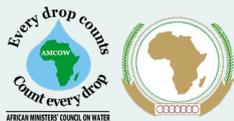
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The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development of the United States Government.

**Cover Page photo:** WaterAid

**Page 3 photo:** AMCOW President and Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, Republic of Namibia

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF AMCOW



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services are essential for economic and social advancement in Africa. Investments in WASH are direct investments in public health and wellbeing, contributing to a happier and healthier population, as well as increasing productivity, job creation and socio-economic development.

The Africa Water Vision 2025 calls for equitable and sustainable use of water for development. In 2015, African Heads of States and sector ministers adopted the Ngor Ministerial Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene calling for sanitation and hygiene budget lines to reach a minimum of 0.5% of GDP by 2020. Despite these commitments, the minimum increase has not been reached and access to WASH is still limited for millions of people across the continent. Over one-third of the population lacks the safety and convenience of basic water services and nearly two-thirds do not have safe sanitation services. Women and girls often bear an unequal burden of hardship from inadequate WASH services.

WASH service delivery is constrained by a financing gap at all levels – including international aid commitments, which declined sharply from US \$3.8 billion to US \$1.7 billion in 2017 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Total current investments must be tripled to an annual amount of \$114 billion, requiring six times the current rate of national government spending on the WASH sector. Africa's Finance Ministers are uniquely positioned to support sector ministers in the development and implementation of sustainable strategies to close this gap. This WASH Finance Advocacy Brief has been developed by AMCOW to help sector ministers raise awareness amongst their peers in finance and other line ministries on the urgent need to prioritize financing of the WASH sector.

AMCOW believes that with the right financing and smart investment, universal access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is possible. With catalytic investment, we can achieve WASH access for all our citizens within the ten years remaining to attain the Sustainable Development Goals targets.

I therefore call on sector and finance ministers and key stakeholders to ensure that funding for the WASH sector becomes a top priority for Africa. Together we can accelerate financial resource allocation to the sector to help the African continent achieve universal access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

**Hon. Carl Hermann Gustav Schlettwein,  
AMCOW President and Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform  
Republic of Namibia**

# Finance Ministers contribute to their citizens having access to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

All African countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calling for universal and equitable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene by 2030. But at current rates of progress, it will be another 150 years before the continent reaches this goal. Governments need to act now to accelerate the improvement and expansion of WASH services, which are essential to nearly all aspects of economic and social development.

Finance ministers, in collaboration with their WASH minister counterparts, are uniquely positioned to help boost the WASH sector. Their support can help ensure that governments allocate sufficient resources to the sector. This support is critical in identifying and seizing opportunities to increase financing and to implementing reforms that improve sector efficiency and governance.

**While all finance ministers operate within the specific context of their country, experience has shown there are clear steps they can take to contribute to more rapid progress in WASH:**



Collaborate with sector ministers to ensure that WASH investment plans and financing strategies are realistic and well designed to achieve national targets.



Encourage and support the development of information systems and capacity to track financial flows and progress in the WASH sector.



Work with sector ministers and regulators to establish equitable tariff structures that recover costs that are affordable for the poor without subsidizing services for the rich.



Recognize what is at stake by assessing the economic return and financial cost of increasing investments in WASH in their country. The benefit cost ratio for sanitation is 5.5.



Facilitate timely and adequate funding to local authorities and service providers.



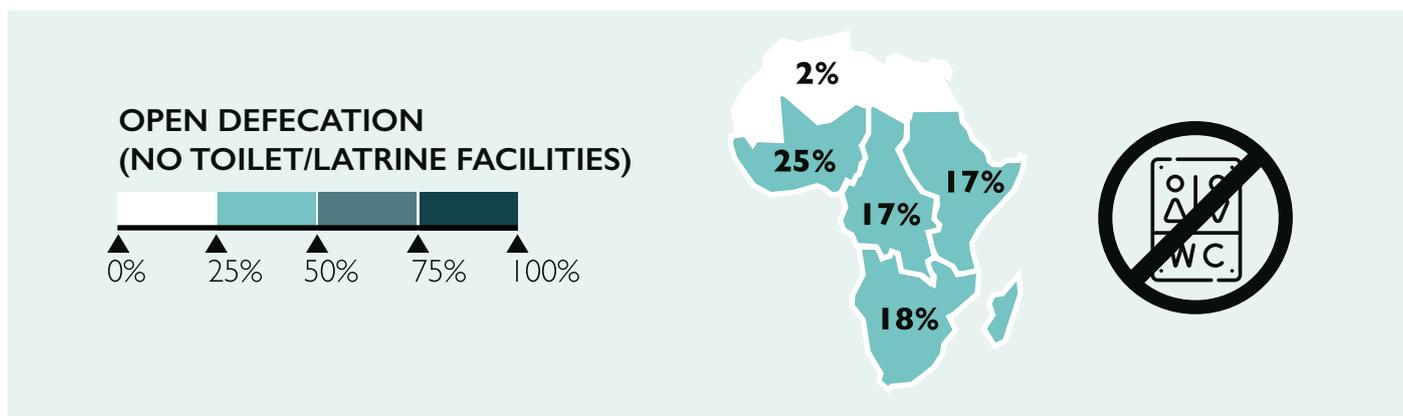
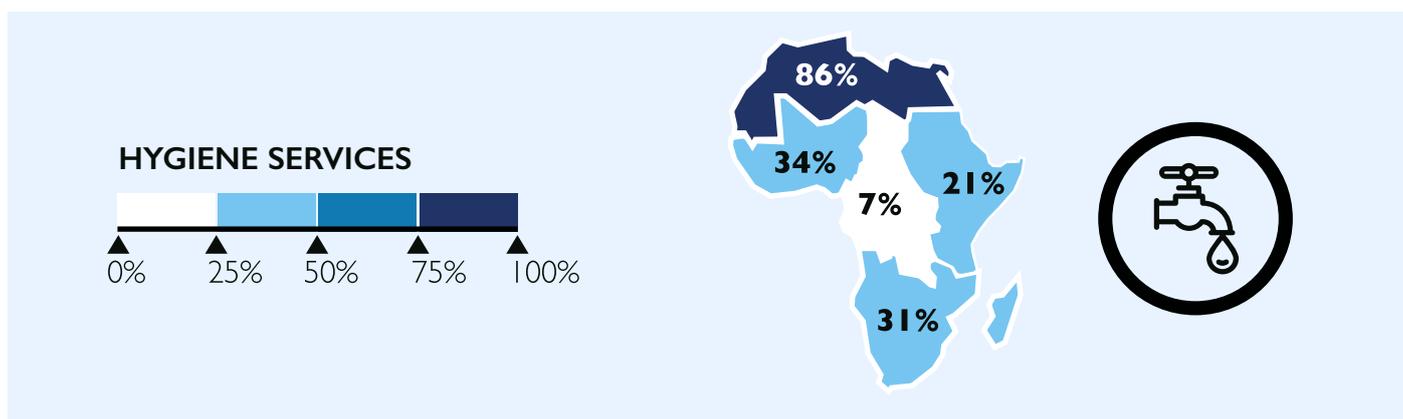
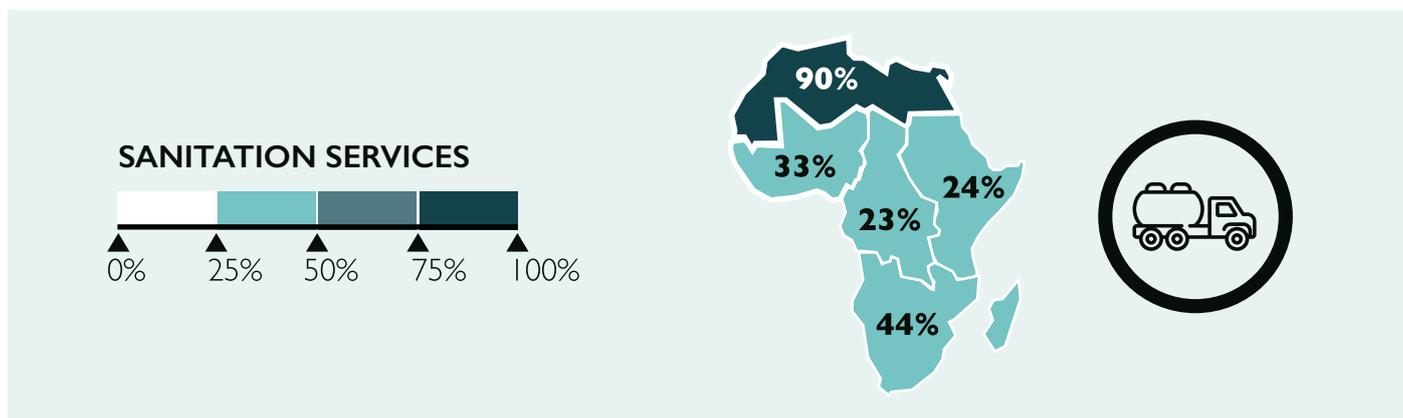
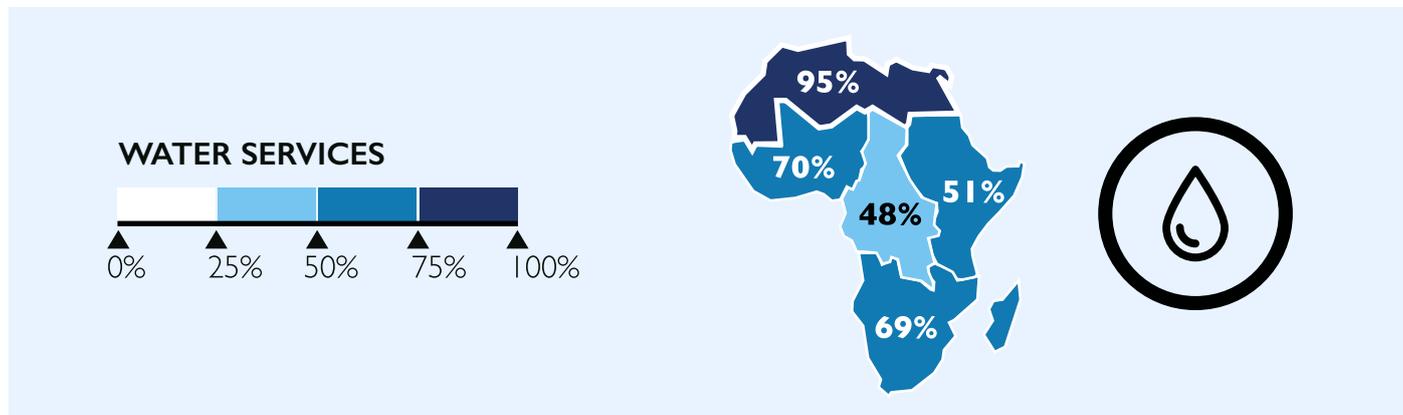
Ensure that financial checks and balances are in place to prevent corruption and inefficiencies.



Promote financial and regulatory policies that create opportunities and reduce risk for private sector investment.

## PERCENTAGE OF WASH COVERAGE IN AFRICAN REGIONS

Many factors contribute to a successful WASH sector. The maps below show the percentages of water, sanitation, and hygiene coverage, as well as the percentage of people who are still openly defecating, in each of the African Union regions.<sup>1</sup>



# Investing in WASH is investing in people



Photo: avijit adobe stock

**Diarrhoea is the second leading cause of death and one of the leading causes of malnutrition in children in Africa.**



**686 374 DEATHS** due to diarrhoeal disease in Africa in 2016.<sup>ii</sup>



**90% OF CASES OF DIARRHOEA** are from inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene.



**40% OF DEATHS** due to diarrhoea in 2016 were children under five.



**55% OF HEALTH CARE FACILITIES** had no basic hygiene services in 2019 and 21% had no water services.<sup>iii</sup>



## HEALTH

The biggest benefits of improved water, sanitation, and hygiene flow from their impact on health, including slowing the transmission of diseases like cholera. Hand hygiene with soap and water is also one of the most important measures to prevent communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 infection.

Adequate WASH services are fundamental to protecting the health of households in Africa. But they are also critical to providing quality health care. Hospitals and clinics that lack basic WASH facilities jeopardize efforts in infection control and prevention, patient safety, and child and maternal health, particularly in relation to child delivery. Available data show, however, that around one-fifth of health care facilities have no water or sanitation services and that less than half have hand washing facilities where they are needed.

## WASH DURING A CRISIS: COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought broad recognition to the importance of hygiene in controlling the spread of disease. According to the WHO, “Frequent and correct hand hygiene is one of the most important measures to prevent infection...” Yet over one third of African households have no handwashing facilities.

The 2019 World Health Assembly Resolution on WASH in health care facilities (HCF) proposes a framework of eight practical steps to embed WASH in health programs and budgets. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, implementing these steps led to upgraded WASH services in nearly 500 health care facilities by the end of 2020. Standards that were set for WASH services were timely for responding to the tenth Ebola outbreak in the DRC as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>iv</sup>



## EDUCATION

The importance of WASH for education goes well beyond lost school days for sick children and youth. Making sure that schools at all levels have adequate and well-maintained WASH facilities, including gender specific latrines and hand washing stations, is essential to creating an environment conducive to learning, personal and social development, and health. But far too many schools in Africa have no water or sanitation services or facilities for basic hygiene.

The implications of WASH in schools are particularly important for girls, who suffer disproportionately the consequences of inadequate facilities. This includes facilities and appropriate materials for managing menstrual periods that allow girls to practice good hygiene with dignity and privacy. Prioritizing appropriate WASH facilities can make a significant contribution to keeping girls in school.

Photo: Marco Betti/WaterAid

**In 2019, 34% of schools in Africa had no water services.**

## MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN UGANDA

Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is central to the dignity of girls and women. A 2012 study in Uganda found that one in ten menstruating girls skips school four to five days every month and that around 23% of girls in the 12 to 18 age group drop out when they begin menstruation. Over the past ten years, the Ugandan Government has actively promoted MHH and in its Second National Development Plan, committed to addressing barriers to girls' attendance and retention in schools. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) with other ministries and partner NGOs developed and signed a charter in which they committed to policy development and advocacy, research, promotion of public/private partnerships, knowledge management, and public information and education. It has also provided operational guidance to schools and local governments and worked to ensure monitoring. The MoES currently chairs a coalition that includes other line ministries as well as development partners and civil society and has issued a circular to all districts, schools and institutions. It continues to conduct capacity building programs of senior women and men teachers in several districts.



**23% OF SCHOOLS** in Africa had no sanitation services.



**46% OF SCHOOLS** in Africa had no water or facilities for basic hygiene.<sup>9</sup>



Photo: Ariadne Van Zandbergen/Alamy



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Reducing inequalities is the predominant theme of the sustainable development agenda. Data on inequalities in WASH in Africa show numerous examples of groups or communities that do not have the level of services that many people take for granted. Serious disparities in sanitation and hygiene exist between rural and urban areas and between the richest and the poorest people throughout the continent.

With the 2030 Agenda, UN Member States committed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In addition to the burden of collecting water, inequalities related to WASH include the risk of harassment or sexual and gender-based violence when women and girls travel long distances for water, use shared toilets, or have no alternative to open defecation.

Member States also pledged to leave no one behind and called for meeting the needs of “All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations...”.

### DISPARITIES IN SERVICE PROVISION



**50% OF PEOPLE IN URBAN AREAS** have access to basic sanitation and hygiene services.

VS



**LESS THAN 30% OF PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS** have access to basic sanitation and hygiene services.



**55% OF THE RICHEST QUINTILE** have access to basic sanitation services.

VS



**ONLY 19% OF THE POOREST QUINTILE** have access to basic sanitation services.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), of which SDG 6 is to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. Water and sanitation underpin wider efforts to end poverty, advance sustainable development, and sustain peace and stability. Two of the targets of SDG 6 directly address the WASH challenge:

6.1 - By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

6.2 - By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.



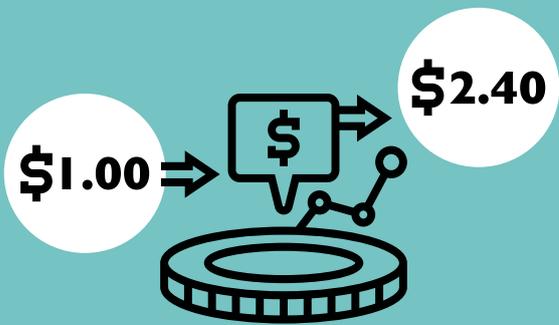
Photo: Julia Eigner/WALIS



## THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Across the continent, the economic benefit-cost ratio for investments to achieve universal access to basic water services has been estimated conservatively at 2.4 and at 5.5 for universal sanitation.<sup>v</sup> For Central Africa, the ratio is greater than ten for sanitation, meaning that every dollar invested yields ten dollars in economic benefits.

Tangible benefits flow from the health impacts of improved WASH services and time saved with better access to water and sanitation facilities. Nearly 30 million households in Sub-Saharan Africa use water sources requiring an hour each day for collection. Thirty million hours per day could be gained with universal access to improved services, reducing gender inequalities for women and girls who are usually responsible for collecting water.



### Benefit-cost ratios for water and sanitation

Across the continent, the economic benefit-cost ratio for investments to achieve universal access to basic water services has been estimated conservatively at 2.4 and at 5.5 for universal sanitation.<sup>v</sup>

### BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES: THE SANITATION ECONOMY

The provision of WASH related goods, services, and infrastructure represents a market with huge potential for which the scale of the opportunity matches the scale of the gaps in service provision. The Sanitation Economy is a concept introduced to capture the multitude of business opportunities presented by sanitation.<sup>vii</sup> These range from toilet products and services to the collection, treatment, and recycling of waste. In India, it is estimated to represent a market worth over US\$60 billion annually, and in Africa there is significant growth of businesses providing these services in rural communities and cities. In addition to business opportunities, meeting people's needs means creating jobs in the WASH sector.

The opportunities in sanitation are a powerful incentive for private sector engagement, but that can only happen on a significant scale when policies and regulations are in place to enable companies to weigh both risks and opportunities.



## COMMITMENTS

Recognizing that WASH services are critical to realizing the aspirations articulated in “Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want,” the leaders of African countries have made commitments to invest:

### 2008 - eThekweni Declaration

32 countries pledged to establish specific public sector budget allocations for sanitation and hygiene programs

### 2015 - Ngor Declaration

Ministers committed to establish track sanitation and hygiene budget lines to reach a minimum of 0.5% GDP by 2020

### 2008 - Sharm El-Sheik Commitments

AU Heads of State and Government to financial resources and develop appropriate investment plans

### 2015 – Sustainable Development Goals

All African countries adopted targets that pledged universal access to water and sanitation

## THE CRITICAL CHALLENGE OF SANITATION AND HYGIENE: NGOR COMMITMENTS

Sanitation and hygiene deserve special attention from the governments of Africa. Traditionally underfunded and often sorely neglected, they are nevertheless essential to unlocking the full social and economic benefits of improved WASH services. The Ngor Declaration was adopted with the vision “that universal access to adequate and sustainable sanitation and hygiene services will be achieved and open defecation eliminated by 2030.” Africa is not on track to fulfill this vision.

According to AMCOW’s 2019 review of progress on the Ngor Commitments, despite commendable progress in leadership and coordination in most countries, only nine progressed in establishing sanitation and hygiene budget lines, and only one of those reported a budget that had reached 0.5% of GDP.

In response, AMCOW has led the development of the African Sanitation Policy Guidelines which aim to strengthen the enabling environment for sanitation, and help create the conditions needed for mobilizing resources and investments.

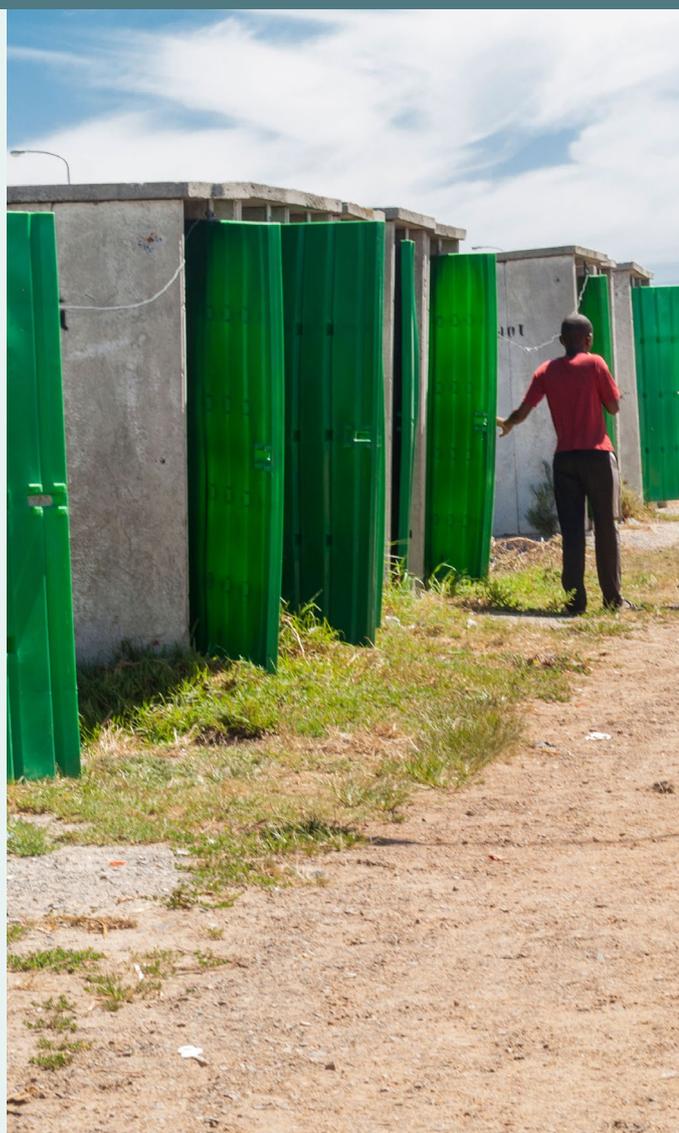
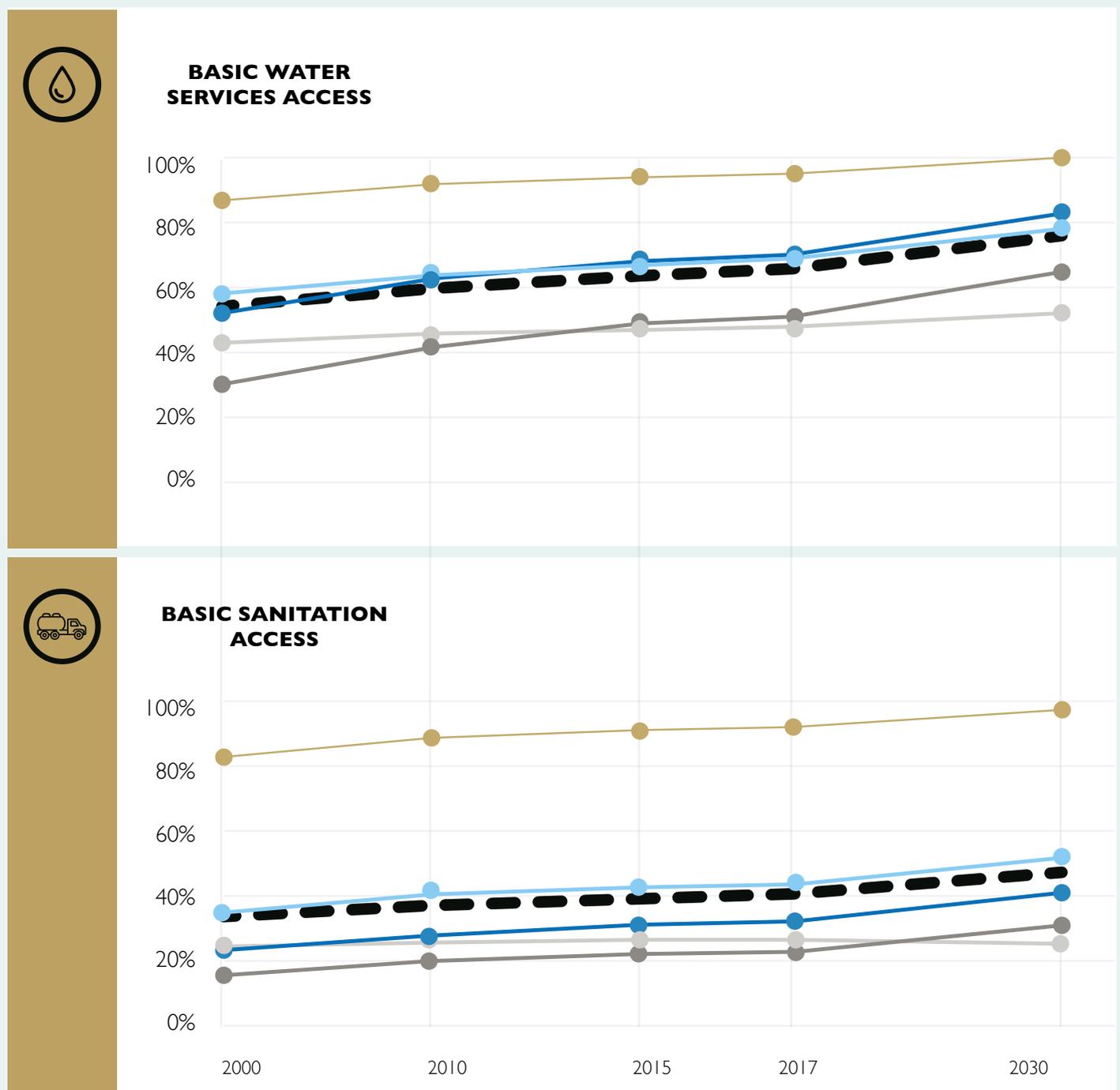


Photo: Galit Seigmann/Alamy

# Are we making progress?

Africa has seen a steady increase in coverage for basic WASH services over the last two decades, but the rate of progress has been far from sufficient to achieve universal coverage by 2030.

Based on progress between 2015 and 2017, if current trends continue, only 77% of Africa's population will have access to basic water services in 2030 and 47% will have basic sanitation. More than 130 million people will not have any access to sanitation facilities unless the pace of progress greatly accelerates. For sub-Saharan Africa, at current rates, it will take between 30 and 150 years to achieve at least basic water supply and sanitation for all.



All Africa
  North Africa
  East Africa
  West Africa
  Southern Africa
  Central Africa

# What do African governments need to do to accelerate progress?

Ministers responsible for WASH must lead in boosting progress in the sector, but they cannot act alone. They need the backing and collaboration of other sectors that are impacted by inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene. And they need to be able to make a credible case for increased financing for WASH to those who propose and decide national budget allocations, including finance ministers and parliamentarians.

There is a widespread need for WASH sector ministries to improve budget and investment planning processes and establish budget tracking mechanisms for water, sanitation, and hygiene that fully capture rural and urban expenditure. This includes ensuring that responsible officials at national and sub-national levels fully understand and participate in budget processes. Based on the 2019 GLAAS report, most countries have been slow to put in place the systems and resources needed to secure financing and implement plans for WASH.

## DEVELOPING WASH FINANCE PLANS OF THE 43 RESPONDENT COUNTRIES:



**On average, 55% of countries**

estimated that they had less than 50% of the necessary human resources. Only six countries reported having more than 75% of what is needed in at least one component of WASH.



**10** had formally approved policies for water, sanitation, and hygiene in both urban and rural areas.



**17** reported the existence of approved and at least partially implemented national WASH implementation plans.



**31** had agreed finance plans for WASH, but 16 considered them to be insufficiently implemented and several did not include hygiene.





Photo: Simon Rawles/Alamy



## FINANCING THE WASH SECTOR

According to the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative, "...WASH services compete with other development priorities..." This complex situation requires the WASH sector to step up efforts to present convincing WASH plans that embed clear objectives, with a detailed and costed strategy to achieve these objectives and which demonstrate consideration for cost-efficient measures. A convincing WASH plan also carefully lays out how it can contribute to achieving the country's national objectives. In developing WASH plans, consultations with finance and budget ministries can help WASH planners refine their financing strategies and present convincing budgets.<sup>viii</sup>



## CLIMATE CHANGE AND WASH

Climate change is not a remote scenario. Major impacts are expected to be widespread within the next few decades, during the useful life of today's investments in water and sanitation infrastructure. More frequent and severe droughts and floods have already been seen in many parts of Africa. The consequences include disruption of water supply services, (both the quantity and quality of water available), overflowing of sewers and latrines leading to spreading of contamination throughout the environment, and the physical destruction of critical water and sanitation infrastructure. It is urgent that investment plans for WASH incorporate measures to mitigate risks related to climate change and that systems be designed for resilience in the face of such threats. Thirty-three of the 50 countries ranked most vulnerable to climate change are in Africa, yet most get less than US \$1 per person per year in climate finance for WASH service adaptation.<sup>ix</sup>

# What will it cost to reach the targets?

In 2015, the annual capital cost to achieve universal coverage with basic water and sanitation services and to eliminate open defecation in Africa by 2030 was estimated to be US \$12.4 billion, over two-thirds of which was for sanitation. This corresponded to 0.64% of Gross Regional Product (GRP) for Sub-Saharan Africa and 0.1% of GRP for Northern Africa.<sup>x</sup>

Capital costs are only part of the picture, however. Significant funds are needed to operate and maintain water and sanitation services. As capital investment results in the creation of additional infrastructure to serve more people and provide higher levels of service, recurrent operation and maintenance (O&M) costs will necessarily increase. The same 2015 study estimated that spending on O&M for the newly served would be 1.4 times the capital expenditure for achieving universal coverage by 2030. It is critical that cost estimates consider both capital and O&M expenditure over the lifetime of the infrastructure. Inadequate spending on O&M can mean the collapse of vital infrastructure with severe consequences for social and economic well-being.

## HOW MUCH ARE COUNTRIES SPENDING?

Twenty-two African countries in the 2019 GLAAS report provided at least partial data on expenditure for WASH. All gave government expenditure on WASH, but there were many gaps in data for household, external, and repayable sources of funding.

Few countries have disaggregated data on expenditure for water, sanitation, and hygiene. Typically, however, the lion's share of spending is for water supply - two-thirds of the total expenditure on WASH by African countries in the 2019 GLAAS report were for water. This is despite the greater cost of achieving sanitation targets and an economic benefit-cost ratio for sanitation investments over twice that for investments in water supply.

Government expenditure for WASH varies widely. As a percentage of GDP, it ranged from 0.002% to 1.82% in the 2019 GLAAS data, with an average of 0.4%. **In 2016, it was estimated that in order to reach SDG 6, that there would need to be contributions on average of 5% of GRP in Sub-Saharan Africa.**



## WASH ACCOUNTS & TRACKFIN

The WASH sector is fragmented, with government, non-government, and private sector organizations involved, and with activities at the national, sub-national, and community levels. WASH accounts monitor funding sources and where and how money is spent. TrackFin, the methodology behind WASH accounts, supports the collection and mapping of WASH financial data to allow expenditure comparison within and between countries. This information is used to formulate plans, track achievements, and inform policy decisions for national WASH objectives. Thirteen countries in Africa have initiated TrackFin with implementation supported by the GLAAS/TrackFin team at WHO.

Mali is using TrackFin to integrate financial monitoring into WASH monitoring. In 2017, the Minister of Energy and Water used results from WASH accounts to demonstrate that drinking water capital expenditure was only 53.5% of what was planned and convinced the Ministry of Finance and partners to increase WASH funding.<sup>xi</sup>

# Where will the funds come from?

Achieving universal and equitable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services means meeting the needs of people both rich and poor, living in rural, urban and peri-urban environments. The funds required for capital and operational expenditure are not the same in all situations, but ultimately there are just three sources of funding: user tariffs and fees for WASH services, including households' investment in self-provision (tariffs); allocation of tax revenue (taxes); and aid funding (transfers).<sup>xii</sup>

Determining who pays for what is the essence of developing a strategy and plan to finance the sector. Of the 43 countries in the 2019 GLAAS report, seven had agreed finance plans that are consistently used covering all the WASH subsectors. Most countries had at least partially implemented finance plans, but seven had no plans for urban drinking water and 12 had none for hygiene.

Finance plans for WASH are critical to mobilizing the resources needed to achieve national targets. Close collaboration between sector and finance ministries is essential to ensuring that they are realistic and robust.

## WATER & SANITATION: HOW TO MAKE PUBLIC INVESTMENT WORK

### A HANDBOOK FOR FINANCE MINISTERS

Published in 2020 by Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), the “[Handbook for Finance Ministers](#)” is a call to action that provides examples and techniques for how finance ministers can boost the level and effectiveness of WASH sector financing in cooperation with counterparts responsible for water, sanitation, and hygiene. It focuses on four critical intervention areas:

- Maximize value from existing public funding.
- Mobilize more funding.
- Increase repayable domestic finance.
- Encourage innovation and least-explored new approaches.





Photo: R.E. Martin

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