

USAID Water and Development Country Plan for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

I. Executive Summary

USAID partners with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (GDRC) to ensure the creation and strengthening of systems required to support sustainable water and sanitation service delivery. Primary water and sanitation investments are integrated into a large health services and systems activity. Interventions focus on improving household water security through investments in sustainability and equity of water and sanitation service delivery, and supporting the operationalization of a new Water Law. Thus USAID/DRC's country plan directly contributes to Global Water Strategy (GWS) objectives, improving water and sanitation service provision and water sector governance, while reinforcing principles of gender empowerment and locally led development.

II. Introduction

Although the DRC is one of the most freshwater-rich countries in Africa, water security is low because of poor access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Lack of access and poor hygiene behaviors are among the top five risk factors associated with death and disability in the country.¹

The DRC failed to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for both water and sanitation, and access is substantially below sub-Saharan regional averages. Basic water facilities are available to only 52 percent of the DRC's population, and less than 29 percent have access to basic sanitation. Due to rapid population growth, the total number of Congolese lacking access to basic water and sanitation facilities actually increased during the MDG period, although the overall percentage with basic access increased.²

Access to improved, non-shared sanitation facilities is low in both urban and rural areas, and gains at the national level have come from increases in rural access. Open defecation remains more common in rural areas, although at less than 20 percent, the practice is relatively limited compared to other countries in the region.

III. GDRC Water and Sanitation Objectives

The DRC aims to eliminate open defecation and provide 100 percent access to basic sanitation by 2021, the end of the National Strategic Development Plan (2017–2021) implementation period. Also by 2021, the country's goal is that 65 percent of the population has access to a safely managed water supply and 45 percent to safely managed sanitation. These ambitious targets represent the GDRC's strong commitment to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of universal access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation by 2030.

¹ IHME. 2015, in Water Poverty Diagnostic. World Bank, 2017

² WHO/UNICEF. 2015. Progress on sanitation and drinking water – 2015 update and MDG assessment.

https://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/JMP-Update-report-2015_English.pdf accessed April 12, 2017

IV. Government of DRC's Current and Planned Strategies and Approaches to Water and Sanitation

At the end of 2015, the DRC passed a National Water Law.³ This law, which is based on Integrated Water Resources Management principles and the management of water resources at the river basin scale, lays the foundation for new reforms and sector policies. The policy framework includes a National Water Policy, a National Hygiene Policy, and a National Sanitation Strategy and Policy, and calls for a dedicated Water Ministry, with an independent regulator for water and sanitation services. The law recognizes that access to water services is a right for all. It also acknowledges the costs involved in providing water services and provides criteria for equitable tariff setting and cost recovery. In addition, the law shifts responsibility for infrastructure to the provincial level, and allows for private sector participation in water provision. Private sector engagement may increase innovation with regard to sustainable models of service delivery.

Government funding for the sector has generally declined over the MDG period from 5 percent in 1990 to 1.2 percent in 2015, and the DRC's WASH sector relies heavily on external partners for both funding and technical assistance. These donors focus activities on water resource management, governance, water supply, access, and treatment.

V. Key Challenges and Opportunities in the Sector

The DRC's new policy framework represents a major advance and an opportunity to increase water security and rapidly meet the country's water and sanitation objectives. If managed properly, the population can have access to and draw sustainable economic benefits from the country's rich endowment of freshwater resources (which makes up an estimated 52 percent of Africa's surface water reserves, and accounts for an estimated 23 percent of Africa's internal renewable water resources)⁴. There remain, however, a number of key challenges associated with governance, equity, sustainability, and financing within the sector.

Governance and finance: A key bottleneck in the DRC's water and sanitation sector is its poor governance. The sector struggles to absorb funding efficiently, hindered by weak institutions, outdated institutional frameworks, and a lack of qualified technicians and managers. Civil society is not well developed and there has been a closing of political space in recent years, limiting their ability to hold elected officials accountable. The mandates of all elected officials in the DRC have expired as result of continued election delays. This, coupled with an increase in the number of human rights abuses perpetrated by state actors and spreading insecurity across the country, has decreased the legitimacy of the GDRC. There is a lack of basic infrastructure, and freshwater resources are not well managed and are becoming degraded, with reports of seasonal shortages.

The DRC economy, which relies heavily on minerals, is in steep decline. Currently, economic growth is actually negative in real terms (removing population growth), thus emptying the government's coffers and deterring any prospects for vital social sector and electoral investments.

³ <http://leganet.cd/Legislation/JO/2016/JOS.13.01.2016.pdf>

⁴ Cited in UNEP. 2011. Water Issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Challenges and Opportunities. http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_DRC_water.pdf Accessed April 14, 2017

There is an estimated financing gap of \$2.4 billion annually to meet the SDGs.⁵ The government's absorptive capacity and ability to spend efficiently and effectively is low—in public projects, utilization of investments is generally less than 50 percent.

Population growth, rapid urbanization, and gender: The annual population growth rate in the DRC is estimated at 2.4 percent. At that rate, the population would double in less than 30 years, which would impede access to basic services such as water and sanitation. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by lack of WASH and shoulder the largest burden in water collection. The excessive amount of time it takes to collect water, as well as the lack of privacy and risk of assault when using inadequate or unisex latrines at school can drastically affect school enrollment and attendance for girls.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for new technologies, products, and business models to improve access to sustainable water and sanitation services. There are opportunities to address product gaps in low-cost, appropriate sanitation products and services, and to improve supply chains to reach those with low access.

VI. USAID/DRC WASH Country Plan

Since 2008, USAID/DRC has made significant investments in water programming. Investments to date have been focused on supporting direct water and sanitation service provision and promoting adoption of improved hygiene behaviors as part of the implementation of the government's "Healthy Village" program. USAID/DRC implemented these activities using two different models: 1) WASH as a component of the Mission's Integrated Health Project and 2) WASH standalone programming through UNICEF/DRC.

USAID's overall goal in the DRC, as outlined in its Country Development Cooperation Strategy for 2015–2019,⁶ is to support the country's long-term transition to more effective and empowering development. To maximize impact, USAID programming targets specific institutions, geographic regions, and technical sectors. Development Objective (DO) 1 focuses on strengthening national-level institutions. DO 2 targets provincial and local institutions in the provinces that make up the former, larger, Kasai and Katanga provinces, as well as large urban populations in the cities of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Transition Objective (TO) 3 focuses on conflict-affected areas of eastern DRC: North and South Kivu, Tanganyika, and parts of Maniema and Orientale provinces. Coordinated donor efforts include key infrastructure investments in these regions toward roads, rail, water, and power by the African Development Bank and the World Bank.

Within this framework, and in response to these challenges and opportunities above, USAID has developed a water and sanitation portfolio targeting opportunities for strategic investments in rural and small town water supply and rural (on-site) household sanitation. Activities also strengthen the correct and consistent adoption of evidence-based hygiene behaviors in the target geographic areas outlined above. The WASH activities will focus on sustainability and equity, while supporting the operationalization of the new Water Law. Objectives include: 1) strengthening WASH governance,

⁵ DRC country document, Sanitation and Water for All High Level Meeting, April 2017.

⁶ <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/democratic-republic-congo-country-development-content-strategy-2015-2019>

leadership, and systems at provincial and lower levels; 2) increasing access to quality, integrated WASH products and services; and 3) increasing adoption of evidence-based WASH behaviors.⁷ Gender empowerment is a cross-cutting theme that will be addressed across all three objectives, and the most vulnerable groups (e.g., women, children under 5 years of age) will benefit from improvements in the coverage and quality of essential facility-based and community-based WASH and other health services.

The Mission will also use water funds to support water sector governance, financing, and behavior change through cross-cutting mechanisms and activities, including:

- Integrated Social and Behavior Change Mechanism
- Global Financing Facility
- Integrated Governance Activity
- Water for Africa through Leadership and Institutional Support

Additional activities advancing the GWS and USAID/DRC's country plan include the Food for Peace's Development Food Assistance Program, participation in the WASH sector donor coordination group, and support to disease outbreak response such as cholera and Ebola. In addition, the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment implements land use planning and natural resources management activities to improve forest habitat that enhances and sustains water resources together with their ecological functions.

Expected results: Overall, USAID and other U.S. government activities are estimated to provide the Congolese with millions of liters of safe drinking water, and to help more than one million people gain access to basic water and sanitation services.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Plan is costed based on prior year resources still available for programming and the FY 2017 estimated allocation of \$10.6 million.

⁷ Safe drinking water management from collection through transport and storage in the household, and including disinfection as appropriate; correct and consistent use of basic sanitation at the household level; and handwashing with soap or ash to break routes of transmission of fecal pathogens.