

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



The Afghanistan 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. WASH Brief in Afghanistan

In 2004, Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Irrigation Program (RuWatSIP) /MRRD was authorized to move from project based and humanitarian modality towards coordinated programmatic approach in provision of water supply and sanitation services. Despite the programmatic and coordinated approach, improved sanitation and water coverage as per MDG definitions were as low as at 33% and 54 % respectively¹; and 18% of rural population still practice open defecation.

A number of factors contribute to the problem of access to clean water and sanitation in Afghanistan; these include prolonged and repeated drought, poor capacity in development of water infrastructures without consideration of hydrogeological parameters and surface contamination of groundwater were among the main causes of the problem. Due to the drought water wells run dry and because of weak operation and management (O& M) system which results in non-functionality of water sources, people collect water from unsafe sources which takes a toll on the health and wellbeing of many Afghan citizens. Over 18 percent of the rural population who are deprived of any basic sanitary facilities end up practicing open defecation. The inadequate sanitation facilities and lack of clean water lead to diarrheal diseases and high mortality rate of children under five years reportedly is² 55/1000. Furthermore, inadequate political commitment in recognizing the role of WASH particularly sanitation as priority in MDG era is another reason for the gap. Both Afghan Government and donor agencies could hardly have a strategy to address this important WASH component prior to SDG era. This changed after revising the sanitation strategy in the WASH policy by MRRD and partners in 2017/2018. After successful implementation of new approach of Afghan Context Community Led Total Sanitation (AC-CLTS) by MRRD in 2013 – 2015, it was decided to roll out CLTS in the country. A joint Logical Framework Workshop conducted in 2015, where the contributions of all stakeholders particularly UNICEF, indicated that in principle Afghanistan can strive to be ODF by 2025. Though AC-CLTS promotes construction of hand washing facilities and excreta management to avoid contamination of surface soil, ground water or surface water, more focus is required to ensure access to safely management sanitation. MRRD as the WASH sector lead

¹ UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Program JMP report 2017

² MoPH DHS 2013

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



in the country has made a strategic shift in terms of - the water supply technologies to be shifted from hand pump to gravity fed system and solar power networking. These systems will assure sustainability and will also pave the way for users' contribution through paying tariffs against the amount of water they use, which would be used for the operation and maintenance of the system. MRRD aims for achieving the SDG 6 - national water and sanitation coverage by 2030 conditioned to availability of required budget

2. Country Context

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South and Central Asia, with a rich history, diverse population, and a total geographic area of 652,864 km². Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization (CSO) estimated the country's population at 29.7 million in 2017. Abundant water resources in the country offer considerable potential for irrigation but not for domestic water supply purposes. Despite of the fertile land, plenty of water sources, and untapped mineral resources, poverty is widespread, affecting more than a third of the country's total population. According to the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2018, Afghanistan is ranked 169 among 188 countries, making it the lowest in Asia.

Though during the early 2000s, Afghanistan experienced high economic growth rates, recently, Afghanistan's growth has slowed and foreign aid inflows have declined, while the deteriorating security environment and political uncertainty undermine private sector confidence in investment in mining sector and economic activities including agriculture sector which is the foundation of Afghanistan's economy and livelihoods, supporting some 80 percent of the country's population, either directly or indirectly. Increasing pressure on available land over the last two to three generations has led to expansion of rain-fed wheat cropping into traditional grazing lands and high mountains which threaten livestock pasture land. Once livestock products contributed more than 50 percent of agricultural GDP.

Afghanistan's annual surface water resources are estimated at 57 billion m³ distributed across five river basins. Groundwater as the main sources of potable water are calculated 18 billion m³. Afghanistan has an estimated overall surface water availability of 2,775 m³ per capita per year, which is considerably higher than other countries in the region. Nevertheless, these water resources are not evenly distributed across the country or equally accessible at all times of the year. Though Afghanistan's water resources may be relatively sizeable compared to other countries in the region, the same resource is coming under significant threat due to mainly climate change and inadequate water resources management approach. According to some studies, Afghanistan is projected to be among those countries that are severely water stressed. Severe drought and uneven distribution of precipitation are becoming more recurrent and causing severe water shortage and displacement of people.

Following nearly four decades of conflict and drought much of Afghanistan's infrastructure including irrigation and domestic water supply facilities have been destroyed or severely damaged. The compound impact of natural (drought as the aftermath of climate change) and human induced (conflict and over

³ World Resources Institute

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



discharge of ground water for agriculture purposes) disasters lead to the ground water depletion and around 40% of served water supply infrastructures run dry. Over 40% of the population is still suffering from shortage of safe drinking water and more than 60% of the citizen is deprived of safe sanitation facilities. Decades of war, conflicts and political instability ruined multiple infrastructures including WASH. All of these undesired circumstances are the obstacles against reaching to everyone in MDG and are also huge challenges in SDG era. Despite all the said situations, 53% of rural Afghans have access to drinking water and MRRD as the sector lead have been striving to attain the SGD 6 target by 2030.

3. SDGs and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector

SDG 6-2 targets and relevant indicators are too ambitious for a country like Afghanistan with fragile economy and inadequate capacity. To evaluate the situation MRRD has established a joint coordination platform with line governmental ministries (MoPH, MUDH, MoE), I/NGOs, UN, CSO and private sector for WASH. The targets and definitions of SDG 6 were reviewed by this group and it was found out that these targets and definition were very ambitious for Afghanistan context. It was, therefore decided to adapt the definitions in Afghanistan Context. This process was led by Ministry of Economy. The discussions are ongoing and the new definitions known as Afghan Context SDG (ASDG) will be reported and government will use the new adapted definition for attaining the ASDG goal # 6, by the set timeline keeping in mind the assumption of availability of the required funding, partners' commitment and security/political stability. Though baseline for water sanitation and hygiene has recently been reported by the Afghanistan National Statistic and Information Authority (NSIA 2018) including safely managed, basic and limited, but the data was only collected through using proxy indicators for the safely managed component. MRRD has been using the access data for at least basic which stands at 53% for rural drinking water, 89 % for urban drinking water and 63 % access at least basic drinking water at the national level. In case of sanitation the access to "at least basic" stands at 33 % for rural population, 56% for urban and 39 % have access to at least basic sanitation facilities at the national level (JMP 2017).

In response to the low coverage and sustainability of WASH services, and using SDG 6-2 as roadmap, a paradigm shift has been brought in policy and process perspectives. In the policy perspective, taking into consideration the field evidence, WASH policy was revised by Water and Sanitation Group (WSG) coordination members including key sector ministries, I/NGOs and support organizations and the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders are clearly defined. As for the process perspective we starting moving from wells fitted hand pumps, with repeated breakage cases, towards more sustainable gravity fed schemes (GFS) and solar powered networks depending on water sources availabilities, terrain, topography and hydrogeology. As for sanitation, we moved from demonstration latrines and subsidy approach towards ACCLTS which has been replicated at large scale with successful and promising results.

4. Collaborative Behaviors, Building Blocks and Guiding Principles

To ensure close coordination and avoid duplication, MRRD led coordination platform under the name of Water and Sanitation Group (WSG) (WSG has been established since almost last two decades. In this

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



forum, all policy level and strategic WASH related matters are discussed. The WSG is supported by a number of technical working groups who report back to WSG. To assure more engagement and inclusiveness of the stakeholders, the Water Technical Working Group (WTWG) chaired by DACAAR (a Danish WASH expert NGO), Hygiene and Sanitation Technical Working Group (HSTWG) chaired by MoPH, School Health Technical Working Group (SHTWG) chaired by Ministry of Education and the WASH Cluster (emergency WASH) chaired by UNICEF and MRRD. SDG is one of the significant agendas discussed in WSG meetings which take place on monthly basis. The National Rural WASH Policy, WASH implementation manuals, Operation and Maintenance Strategy, Community Led Total Sanitation Implementation Manual and other important documents are some of the products of WSG. SWA, SACOSAN, AFCOSAN are the international, regional and national water and sanitation forums that makes one of the agendas of WSG discussed by WASH partners and joint decisions are made.

MRRD still believe and obey the former theme “some for all, not all for some” of the National Rural WASH Policy and takes into consideration serving the marginalized groups through its some for all, not all for some vision. The Citizen Charters’ National Priority Program (CCNPP) has developed special budget line for nomadic groups in rural Afghanistan. Under this line, the nomads will benefit from all the services of the Citizen Charters’ (CC) projects. Looking to the available strengths (existence of National Rural WASH policy document, capacity at the national level and guidelines) the commitment made by Afghanistan for achieve SDG 6, no one will be left behind by 2030 as full country coverage, conditioned to the availability of required resources (financial, political will, environment). MRRD will also be striving to strengthen the shortcoming (low capacity at sub-national level, funding, security measures/access) through inviting the attention and assistance of donors, country policy makers and relevant actors.

5. Eliminating Inequalities

The vision of “some for all, not all for some”, and the WASH policy strives for leaving no one behind. Under the sanitation movement (ACM), full district coverage strategy is being enforced and made mandatory to all implementing partners. A further shift will occur from district-wide ODF to a higher level of provincial-wide ODF status. Under this strategy, unless 100% of communities in a district and 100% districts in a province have not been reached, the declaration and recognition will not take place. ACM initially takes start from 100% inhabitants of a community and moves towards bigger settlements. Same approach is being followed by the Citizen Charters’. It is realized that shortcoming exists in availability of specific data for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, therefore, exclusive programs, projects and services cannot be planned to target these marginalized groups. Since the targets and definitions of SDG 6 for Afghanistan was very ambitious, Ministry of Economy is in the process of adapting the definitions into Afghanistan Context. Once these adapted definitions are on board, it will be reported as Afghan Context SDG (ASDG). MRRD develops national plans for the neediest population, but that’s not being fully implemented due to forced change of the locations through political pressures and donor priorities. When the locations are changed, budget also shifts from the neediest to new locations and neediest remains unfunded and unserved. The national WASH Management Information System (MIS) established by MRRD

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



which reports on WASH services and is open for everyone. Partners insert their data into the system and it can be used for better planning. Fully addressing the inequalities is yet to be part of the process.

The WASH in Schools package and the CCNP are implementing full package for all. In schools, both gender schools are considered for provision of services as well as CCNP covers every one and nomadic groups as well. The data for other groups (most vulnerable and marginalized) had made this difficult to reach to them with specific services. CCAP policy, Kochies/nomad/IDPs policy and Afghanistan CLTS movement for sanitation are the documents and procedures through which the services reach to everyone and all groups in a district and province. Once a district and a province declared Open Defecation Free (ODF), this means that everyone has access to sanitation facilities and use it.

Main targets of the country under the CCAP is to construct 6000 schools with WASH package.

6. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Financing

An estimated USD 40 million per year will be required for achieving the SDG 6 target. Once the entire country is covered with WASH facilities, it is assured that no group will be left unserved.

A major constraint for the WASH sector is the budget. We have a shortfall of about USD 20 million per year which means the main funding we manage to get for WASH from UNICEF, Ministry of Finance and USAID, is about USD 15 to 20 million a year, while the required annual amount is USD 40 million.

MRRD has been striving for fund raising, but as yet, no approach and mechanism that take us closer to more funding than the aforementioned amount, is in place. We continue to collaborate with UNICEF as a major partner in WASH. USAID is also major donor in WASH. More recently, MRRD managed to secure a small amount of funding from the Italian embassy which has been committed for 3 years in 4 provinces. It is worth mentioning that there is no specific finance mechanism in place to address the progressive elimination of inequalities and ensure the national treasury authorities and decision makers that question of access to WASH facilities is question of the human right.

7. Country Priorities and Commitments

In water supply and sanitation (SDG6), MRRD is committed to strive for reaching the ASDG target by 2030 conditioned to availability of required resources and opportunities. In water supply we are gradually moving from water points (wells fitted with hand pumps) towards more sustainable gravity fed schemes (GFS) and solar powered networks depending on water availability, terrain, hydrogeology and topography. In Sanitation, it is expected to declare and convert high number of OD provinces to ODF provinces so that everyone has their own latrine and use it and OD practices are completely eliminated. These are the government commitments made in the WSG forum/a governmental led platform.

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



The government is calling upon all WASH partners and donor agencies for collaboration in achieving the objectives and reaching to the target. Several NGO/INGOs have started joining the Afghanistan CLTS Movement who made this possible to declare 12 districts ODF in the country so far. Korean embassy invested in sanitation through ACM and now Italian embassy has allocated a small fund for certain provinces.

The long-term WASH strategic plan and Country Program for Sanitation led us to reaching the priorities and reaching to every one so that the inequalities are removed. These documents are being used as roadmap.

8. Mechanism for Review and Follow up

MRRD has established the national rural WASH Management Information System in which the progress is recorded and is open for public and partners, however, this will also use for informed decision making, planning, coordination and monitoring to assure WASH as basic needs is being provided to everyone and everywhere. This system shows the data on water and sanitation against every partner and the accumulative progress.

There are certain barriers towards achieving the commitments and approaches to WASH. To name the most important ones: Funding gap/deficiency, restricted access due to security constraints and war, political instability, donor fatigue, big capital-intensive water projects usually overshadow small WASH schemes which somehow connected to low level of political support and back up in WASH sector. The logic behind investing in more income generating water projects are to later fund WASH but this might be due to low level of awareness of the policy makers on the economic impact of the WASH.

9. Process and Materials used in the Preparation of the Brief

The materials used in preparing this brief are National Rural WASH Policy, Country Program for Sanitation, Long Term WASH Strategic Plan, CCAP manual, GLASS and JMP 2017 Report, National Rural WASH MIS, Inter Ministry Working Group Meeting Discussions/minutes and WASH Annual Report, field evidence.

10. Contacts

Eng Ghulam Qader,
Executive Director,
Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Irrigation Program (RuWatSIP)
Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development