

Briefing Note: Towards Progress on Sanitation: The Case of Cameroon

Meike van Ginneken (Sector Manager, World Bank), Jan Drozd (Senior Water and Sanitation Specialist, World Bank) and Miguel Vargas-Ramirez (Senior Water and Sanitation Specialist, World Bank)

Access to sanitation in Cameroon fell from 61 percent in 2000 to 58 percent in 2010. While rates of access to drinking water and improved sanitation in Cameroon are higher than average for sub-Saharan Africa, progress has been uneven. Similarly, it has reached a larger portion of the urban population than the rural. This is taking place at a time when urbanization is increasing and an estimated 75 percent of urban residents live in informal settlements.

To achieve its human and economic development goals, Cameroon requires a significant change in its approach to basic service delivery, including sanitation. The country has already taken its first step, which was to design a suitable national strategy to increase sanitation coverage based on an assessment of sector issues. Following a request by the government of Cameroon, the Water Partnership Program (WPP) (through its Sanitation, Hygiene, and Wastewater Support Service, SWAT)¹ supported the development of a sanitation strategy for two major cities, Douala and Yaoundé. This effort spurred a much-needed national dialogue on sanitation and provided convincing evidence that change was needed. Based on the outcomes of this dialogue, the WPP supported the development of a 10-year national sanitation strategy that aims to increase sanitation coverage from 34 percent to 57 percent by 2020. The national strategy was signed by the Prime Minister of Cameroon and adopted by the Ministry of Energy and Water (MINEE) in 2011. It is now being implemented through a \$30 million, World Bank credit (see box on the right). This credit is expected to result in more cost-effective public investments, thus providing more people with access to improved sanitation without increasing household and government costs.

The WPP-funded activities not only leveraged World Bank financing but also helped to rekindle donor interest in investing in Cameroon. Indeed, other donors have shown interest in supporting the new framework as well.

Background

Although rich in natural resources, Cameroon lags behind the rest of the world

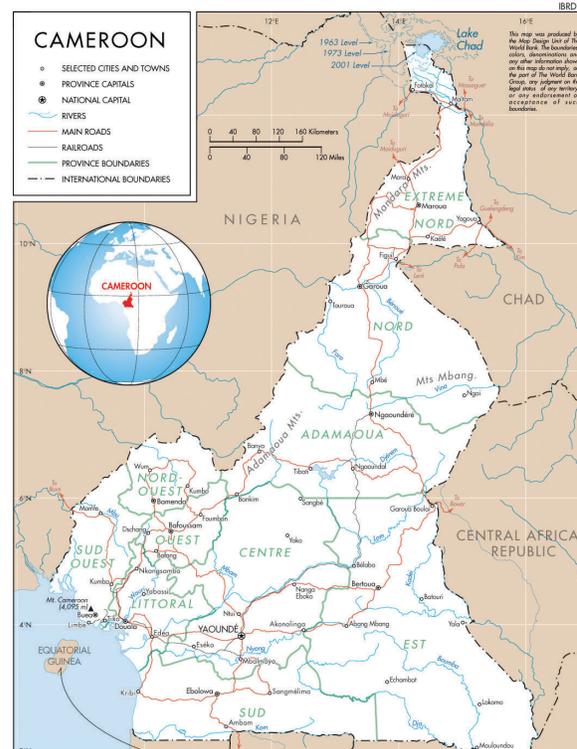
on several indicators of social well-being. The country is ranked 131 out of 169 countries on the 2010 Human Development Index. More than half the population suffers

1. SWAT is one of the three Expert Support Teams (ESTs) funded by WPP. As of January 2011, the three ESTs have merged into the new Water Expert Team (WET).



The Water Partnership Program (WPP) is a World Bank program funded by the governments of the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The WPP aims to enhance the World Bank's performance on reducing poverty through the mainstreaming of pragmatic approaches for Water Resources Management and development, the improvement of quality and effectiveness of Water Service Delivery, and the mainstreaming of water services and management in climate-resilience, inclusive green growth.

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WORLD BANK SANITATION PROJECT FOR CAMEROON

The objective of the proposed program is to increase the quality of sanitation services as well as the rate of access to these services for people in Cameroon.

The first phase involves a \$30 million Bank loan that will be executed between 2011 and 2015. The objective of this phase is to improve planning and management of the sanitation sector as well as to provide access to improved sanitation services in selected rural and urban areas. This will be achieved by piloting new approaches, hands-on capacity building for improved local planning, and institutional, technical and financial studies.

from poverty, including poor education and health as well as a low standard of living. Like many developing countries, Cameroon has fared better in meeting its water supply goals than its sanitation goals, and reached a larger portion of urban than rural inhabitants. Ninety-five percent of the people living in urban areas have access to an improved water source, compare to only 52 percent of the population in rural areas. For the entire country, access to sanitation fell from 61 percent in 2000 to 58 percent in 2010. Moreover, 12 percent of the population in rural areas still practices open defecation. In Cameroon's largest cities, Yaoundé and Douala, each home to approximately two million people, the access rate has decreased over the past 20 years. Challenges will increase as the country further urbanizes and more informal settlements spring up.

Low levels of access to sanitation, coupled with high vulnerability to flooding, pose huge health risks to the population of Cameroon, as evidenced by the 2010 cholera outbreak that infected an estimated 10,000 people.²

The institutions mandated to regulate and provide sanitation services are many and their responsibilities overlap. Ministries and local governments lack the resources and capacity to carry out their mandates.

Historically, the government focused only on collective sewers and wastewater treatment plants. However, these proved to be too expensive to maintain and too large to expand to new urbanizing populations, as is the case for much of the region.

WPP Expert Support for Cameroon's Two Largest Cities

In 2009, the government of Cameroon requested support from the WPP to develop an initial sanitation strategy for



Unsafe sanitation conditions in flood prone areas in Cameroon increase health risks for the population. Right and left: Open sewers in low-lying areas in Douala. (Photos: Miguel Vargas-Ramirez, World Bank)

the country's two largest cities: Douala and Yaoundé. Due to the specific technical expertise needed, the WPP assigned the work to its Sanitation, Hygiene, and Wastewater Support Service (SWAT). SWAT undertook a study that evaluated options for increasing access to sanitation in both cities in cooperation with local and national authorities and other stakeholders.

The SWAT study found that most households in the two cities use on-site sanitation, and that sludge from latrines and septic tanks is not disposed of properly. A few hygiene education programs have been implemented, but only in response to public health emergencies. Virtually no public investment in sanitation in Douala or Yaoundé has been made in the last twenty years. Sewerage networks and wastewater treatment works covered few people and their operation was hindered by an inadequate management system, inappropriate technology, lack of qualified staff, and lack of capacity to adequately operate and maintain facilities.

SWAT devised three scenarios for sector development, including options for upgrading sewerage networks, wastewater treatment

facilities, and on-site and communal systems. Each scenario included a cost analysis and provided options for spending about \$40 million to reach varying portions of the population. The study showed that the biggest health gains could be obtained through investments in hygiene promotion and by providing access to basic sanitation services.

SWAT emphasized the need to reinforce capacity at all levels, and for the government to offer a variety of technological options that suit the urban layout, as well as the limited availability of human, financial and material resources. The study concluded that the government should allow the local market for sanitation services to develop. By providing space for innovation, the government could help lower the cost of infrastructure in the long term and thus partially address issues of affordability.

The WPP Grant: Towards A Sanitation Strategy for Cameroon

The SWAT recommendations emphasized that the development of an adequate national sanitation strategy is crucial for the country to achieve its Millennium Development Goals

2. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Cameroon: Cholera outbreak*, Emergency appeal n° MDRCM011, GLIDE n° EP-2011-000034-CMR, April 4, 2011

(MDGs). The lack of direction has constrained investment in sanitation and has been a factor in the country's delay in meeting the MDG on sanitation. Data from the 2010 Joint Monitoring Programme report indicate that approximately 6.5 million additional people must have access to improved sanitation by 2015 to meet the goal.³

Following the work carried out by SWAT, the WPP funded the development of a national sanitation strategy. The strategy aims to increase national sanitation coverage from 34 percent to 57 percent by 2020 through four major components:

- 1) Stimulating demand for new facilities through hygiene promotion and partial hardware subsidies for household facilities;
- 2) Setting up a septage treatment program and offering subsidies to pay for sludge collector tipping fees;
- 3) Supporting sector decentralization by strengthening the procedures and capacity of local authorities to meet their new role as a service provider and regulator; and
- 4) Constructing 1.1 million improved sanitation facilities across the country.

The strategy was developed through a stakeholder engagement process that included government, private sector, and NGO participants, and was completed in April 2011. During the process, the WPP facilitated the exchange of knowledge by bringing in experiences from Ghana, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Brazil and conducting stakeholder workshops. Representatives from these countries provided feedback to their Cameroonian counterparts regarding financial, engineering, and institutional aspects of the draft strategy. A letter outlining the sector policy was signed by the Prime Minister in May of 2011, and the full strategy was then adopted by the government.



Left: Traditional latrine in the Far North Region. Right: Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines built for project to improve sanitation in the Far North Region. (Photos: Miguel Vargas-Ramirez, World Bank)

The cost of the ten-year investment program is estimated at \$600 million. Despite its focus on low-cost technology and limited use of subsidies for hardware, implementing the national sanitation strategy requires major public investments. The strategy's financing plan includes introducing a surcharge on water consumption for users with sewer connections, continuing to charge an existing fee to polluters, and additional funds from the public sector and donors. A financing plan estimated that 24 percent could be contributed by households and the remainder provided by governments and donors. To start the process, the government of Cameroon received a \$30 million credit from the World Bank.

In addition to investment in infrastructure, institutional reforms that clarify roles and responsibilities will also be necessary to significantly improve sanitation services in Cameroon. The national strategy proposes empowering local authorities to take a leadership role in sanitation, and includes a mechanism to channel resources to them. It also proposes the establishment of a Department of Sanitation within the Ministry of Energy and Water to support local authorities and coordinate the national sanitation program.

Implementing the National Sanitation Strategy

Following a request from the government of Cameroon, the World Bank approved a credit in June 2011 to support the implementation of the sanitation strategy.

The project will rely on a learning-by-doing methodology to demonstrate how increased investment can lead to sustained results in urban and rural sanitation. Because improving sanitation requires changes in attitudes and behavior as well as access to improved infrastructure, the project will emphasize hygiene education and sanitation marketing.

The project aims to provide 2 million people with direct and indirect benefits, nearly one quarter of whom will receive improved household sanitation facilities. The project will improve sanitation not only at the household level, but in health centers, public markets, and schools. The local private sector will be encouraged to provide sludge management, and NGOs will support the project's education and marketing campaigns.

3. The population in Cameroon is expected to reach 21.3 million people in 2015 (source: US Census Bureau International Database), of which 73 percent should have access to improved sanitation to reach the sanitation MDG (JMP, 2010).

The project consists of three components: (1) urban sanitation, (2) rural sanitation, and (3) institutional strengthening and project management.

- 1) The *urban sanitation component* will support at-scale pilot projects in Douala that integrate support for promoting hygiene and marketing household latrines,
- 2) The *rural sanitation component* will support hygiene promotion and marketing of household and public latrines particularly in the Far North Region,
- 3) The *institutional strengthening and project management component* will support the provision of technical assistance to clarify institutional roles and responsibilities.

By increasing access to sanitation and improving the disposal of sludge, the project is expected to have a positive impact on public health and the quality of life, and reduce environmental pollution. It will contribute toward achievement of the health, water supply and sanitation, and urban development MDGs, and stimulate further investment in the sector.

The combination of SWAT and WPP work culminated in a World Bank credit for the implementation of a new national sanitation strategy for Cameroon.

The combination of SWAT and WPP work culminated in a World Bank credit for the implementation of a new national sanitation strategy for Cameroon. More donors have also taken an interest in providing technical assistance and lending to the country's sanitation sector, including UNICEF, the French Development Agency (AFD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

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The WPP is coordinated by a Program Management Team based in the Water Anchor of the Transport, Water, and Information & Communication Technology (TWI) Department of the World Bank.



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