

République Centrafricaine Country Overview



I. General context

The Central African Republic (CAR) is going through a long and complex humanitarian crisis. In 2019, there were several signs that the socio-political and economic situation in the Central African Republic would improve following the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR), the consequent decrease in clashes between armed groups, and the acceleration of the redeployment of state services in the provinces. However, the plunge in macroeconomic indicators, the rise in food insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 revealed how short-lived these gains could be due to the depth of the structural problems, the volatility of the situation and the persistence of violent shocks.

The Central African population is estimated at 5.2 million according to the 2003 RGPH projection. Of this population, more than 580,000 are internally displaced and 606,000 live as refugees outside the country. 2.6 million people, including 1.2 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020, representing 59% of the country's population.

Water and sanitation facilities have not been spared by the conflict. Moreover, they are insufficient but increasingly in demand. Population access to WASH services remains very low in Central African Republic, with a water coverage rate of around 40% and less than 30% for sanitation in 2018. The conflict has largely contributed to this deterioration. Indeed, displacement and insecurity have led to the abandonment of facilities, if not outright vandalism.

The combination of low rates of access to water and sanitation, low health coverage and economic vulnerability of households ranks the Central African Republic among the most vulnerable countries in the world to the COVID-19 pandemic according to the INFORM COVID-19 index.

Despite this worrying situation described above, efforts have been made in recent years in the sector to improve the living conditions of the population. Thus, the water and sanitation sector is one of the eight priority sectors of the Government's national policy, as reflected in the Plan for the Recovery and Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (RCPCA 2017-2021). In this document, the Government committed to providing access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation services to an additional 1,500,000 people by the end of 2021, a figure that far exceeds the commitment made in the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership.

II. Potential Benefits for Economic Growth: Role of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene or Economic Benefits of Investing in this Sector during the VIDOC Pandemic-19

The Central African Republic (CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC), ranked 187th/189th in the world according to the Human Development Index in 2018, must place particular emphasis on the Water, Hygiene and Sanitation sector as it contributes to the achievement of 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thus, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC loses annually 13.2 billion FCFA or about 26 million Euro, or 1.2% of the national GDP due to poor sanitation, according to a study conducted in 2012 by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank.

Even if there have been no recent studies on the contribution of water and hygiene to the country's economy, the development of drilling and latrine emptying companies, which create jobs, has been noted for several years.

This demonstrates that a viable investment in the water and sanitation sector will guarantee a better quality of life, lasting peace in CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC and its economic development.

Today, the devastating consequences of epidemics or pandemics such as COVID-19, Ebola, cholera and other diseases on the world's population and economy highlight the vulnerability of those who do not have access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

On the economic level, the fight against Covid-19 through water and sanitation facilities has beneficial effects in the Central African Republic on :

- Schooling, because the reduction of water fetching has allowed children, especially girls, to have time to go to school;
- the reduction of water chores has enabled women to engage in other income-generating activities.
- small businesses (bakery, restaurant...) and the development of handicrafts (hand washing machines, soaps);
- the development of micro drinking water supply systems managed by the private sector also constitutes IGAs and job creation.
- the mobilization of new actors such as: the General Directorate of Civil Protection, the National Army, religious organizations and other natural leaders (youth organization, women's organization) for communication on good hygiene practices.

Access to sanitation and drinking water services contributes to improving the living conditions of the populations.

To this end, investing in universal access to water and sanitation in CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC improves public health, but also catalyzes the development of other sectors (education, health, industry, trade, etc.).

III- Existing water, sanitation and hygiene service levels and effects of COVID-19

Access to drinking water and basic sanitation services is a prerequisite for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), which advocates universality, equity and continuity of service at an affordable price.

In recent years, the problems related to poor access to water and sanitation facilities have attracted the attention of all stakeholders and communities at the national level. In 2020, national needs for basic sanitation and drinking water services have increased significantly with the decovid-19 pandemic. The deficit in drinking water and sanitation service provision, low health coverage and low income of a large proportion of households have shown that CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC is classified among the first degree vulnerable countries in covid-19.

The national coverage rate for basic sanitation remains below 30 percent in 2018. For drinking water, this rate is around 40% in 2018.

According to the study CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC carried out as part of the project to study drinking water supply and sanitation in the 16 chief towns of the CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC's prefectures (PEAEPA-16CLP), nearly 23% of the population surveyed said they were affected by flooding due to the poor development of the rainwater drainage network and more than 50% by poor waste and excreta management. The same study cited above shows that the services in charge of solid waste management are not structured and lack qualified personnel.

RCA, like other African countries, has ratified the various international legal instruments and global and regional visions on reducing the number of people without access to sanitation and drinking water as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, the resources allocated to the water and sanitation sector in the country are not commensurate with the needs.

This, coupled with the covid-19 pandemic, is impacting human health and reducing the life expectancy of the active population which should be working.

IV- Making Smart Investments: Opportunities for Economic and Social Development

Faced with the many challenges to be met to achieve universal access to water and sanitation services, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC will need 27 billion CFA francs, or \$53 million per year until 2030, to achieve access to water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

It is therefore important, on the one hand, to find alternatives to current traditional financing and, on the other hand, to optimize the available resources.

For this reason, Finance Ministers have a fundamental role in forging and maintaining the links and partnerships needed to effectively integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into the economic and health recovery measures that will enable us to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for urgent action to ensure hygiene for all and to support economies and the health of populations.

Indeed, water, sanitation and hygiene, combined with physical distancing, are essential to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and are a first line of defense against this health threat.

In order to increase investment in the water and sanitation sector in CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, the State, through the finance laws, must review its annual contribution upwards as set out in the 2012 commitments.

In this sense, a significant effort has been made, as the amount allocated to this sector in the Finance Law has increased from CFAF 343 million in 2019 to CFAF 1,570 million in 2020, in order to combat the spread of Covid-19.

In the same vein, the private sector should be encouraged to invest more in the water and sanitation sector by presenting them with the opportunities and attractiveness of the sector.

Nevertheless, he noticed that today, the number of companies/companies CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC trying out drilling and mineral water production is increasing, which shows that the private sector is more and more interested in this sector. The economic spin-offs beyond job creation is the reduction of the costs of the works by 25% and the availability of drinking water in quantity and quality.

In perspective, the setting of taxes and fees based on the current principles of user-pays and polluter-pays will make it possible to make the National Water and Sanitation Fund, created by the Law on the Water Code in 2006, operational.

In addition, the Green Climate Fund must also be tapped.

V- Actions Identified to Support National Priorities through the Mutual Accountability Mechanism

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC had made commitments under the SWA:

- **Commitments made by the government in 2019**

- Revise the National Water Policy (NWP) according to the SDOs with a focus on reducing inequalities and equity. The NWP has already been developed and validated.

Implementation status: The NWP, validated by all actors in the sector, is in the process of being adopted by the Government. Once it has been adopted, all that remains to be done is to develop the programs that will structure its implementation.

- Reduce the proportion of people practicing open defecation and provide access to drinking water and sanitation for an additional 500,000 people, particularly the most vulnerable, by the end of 2021.

Implementation status: Number of additional people with access to:

- drinking water: 191,100 people;
- basic sanitation: 325,000 people.

- Make the National Water and Sanitation Fund operational with a specific budget line for sanitation and hygiene.

Implementation status: The draft text on the organization and operation of this fund is available.

- **Commitments made by partners in 2019: UNICEF**

- Support the Government to revise the National Policy and Strategies on Hygiene, Water and Sanitation (WASH) according to the SDOs.

Implementation status: Recruitment of a consultant, financing of validation workshops and multiplication of documents for the Council of Ministers.

- Support the Government to end open defecation and improve access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by end 2021.

Implementation Status: Number of additional people with access to:

- o Number of additional people with access to: 91,963 people;
- o basic sanitation: 167,533 people;

- Support the Government to operationalize the National Water and Sanitation Fund with a specific budget line for sanitation and hygiene.

Implementation status: Participation in the review and financing of the committee.

The Government's commitments are essentially derived from the 2017-2021 Central African Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) and are monitored through a monitoring system set up under this plan.

UNICEF's commitment stems from its 2017-2021 Cooperation Program with the Government, but monitoring is done bilaterally with the Government. Monitoring for both UNICEF and the Government is done semi-annually (twice a year).

- **Commitments made by the Government for 2021**

In view of the evolution of certain commitments that have been made and whose targets have been reached on the one hand, and in view of the change of context related to Covid-19 on the other hand, it is important to formulate new commitments to achieve universal access to sanitation and drinking water.

To this end, the Government through the Ministry of Energy Development and Water Resources is committed to promote the supply of drinking water and the sanitation of wastewater and excreta of the populations not only in the context of Covid-19 but also of sustainable development by:

- ✓ **For 2021 :**

1. the construction of 800 water wells ;
2. the distribution of 2,000 hand-washing machines to households; and
3. distribution to vulnerable households 2000 sanplat slabs.

- ✓ **By 2030 :**

4. the development and implementation of a National Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Program by 2030.

The water, sanitation and hygiene sector is cross-cutting with the involvement of several actors, which indicates that the platform for consultation and coordination of the sector's actors set up in 2017 and co-chaired by the Ministers in charge of Water Resources and Health has an important role to play in the framework of mutual accountability. Unfortunately, it is not really operational. Thus, actions will be taken to revitalize it. This will make it possible to forge stronger links between the Ministries and the various actors (technical and financial partners, civil society, enterprises and others).