



	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019	Jul 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Total
Samuel Boe	25	25											
Idlady Zulu	25												
Samuel Kollie	25	25	25										
George Dayangor	25	25	25	25									100
Martha Peters	25	25	25										
Marie Williams	25	25	25	25									
Kaunne Smith	25	25	25	25									
William Thomas	25	25	25	25	25								
Alice Duah	25	25	25	25	25	100							
John Zegar	25	25	25										
James Boe	25	25	25										
Mary Tars	25	25	25										100
Ruth Boe	25	25											
T-gint S. Jantipor	25	25											100
Neil Wee	25												
Francis G. Garbala	25												
Ellen v. Payne	25	25											100
John Jantipah	25	25											100
George Dennis	25	25											
Bama-you Garbala	25	25	25	25									100
Grace Garmondah	25	25	25	25									100
Gorpu Klee													100
Robert A.S. Jayway													
Hauch von tion													



**META-EVALUATION OF THE LIBERIA WASH CONSORTIUM:  
2007-2019**

**FINAL REPORT**

**APRIL 2019**

## META-EVALUATION OF THE LIBERIAN WASH CONSORTIUM FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER, HYGIENE AND SANITATION SERVICES IN LIBERIA.

This report was produced at the request of Concern Worldwide - Liberia under the Terms of Reference: Meta Evaluation of the Liberian WASH Consortium for sustainable water, hygiene, and sanitation services in Liberia, received on January 22, 2019.



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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAH	Action Against Hunger
AFD	Agence Française du Développement
AO	Absolute Options
CHT	Community Health Team
CCT	Consortium Coordination Team
CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFI	Development Finance Institution
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EU	European Union
EUWF	European Union WASH Facility
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme
KII	Key Informant Interview
LOE	Level of Effort
LWC	Liberia WASH Consortium
NCTU	National Coordination Technical Unit
ODF	Open Defecation Free
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UYPEDL	United Youth for the Peace, Education, Transparency and Development of Liberia
WHO	World Health Organization
WMC	WASH Management Committee

# I. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

## I.1 INTRODUCTION

After the end of the second Liberian Civil War, the Liberia WASH Consortium (LWC) was established in 2007 as response to the water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions in the country. In addition to extremely limited access to WASH services in both urban and rural areas, the WASH sector suffered from a lack of harmonization and coordination, insufficient (or non-existent) national policy frameworks, and weak government capacity at all levels. Currently consisting of six members, including Action Against Hunger (AAH), Concern Worldwide, Oxfam, PSI, Tearfund and WaterAid, the LWC originally targeted 7 counties including Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Bong, Grand Bassa, River Cess and Sinoe Counties. As of March 2019, the LWC remains active in these areas, with the exception of Lofa and Bong Counties. To date (2007-2018) the LWC has focused on the following areas:

1. Provision of Basic WASH services in rural and urban Liberia;
2. National and local institutional capacity building for effective coordination and data management;
3. Strengthening community structures and local actors for WASH facility sustainability;
4. Cholera preparedness and response.

The LWC is in the final stages of the Irish Aid funded project: 'Tapping into Liberia's WASH Potential: Strengthening Sustainability in Schools and Communities.'

Irish Aid has been the sole donor of the LWC since 2017 and is currently in the final stages of its Irish Aid-funded project: 'Tapping into Liberia's WASH Potential: Strengthening Sustainability in Schools and Communities'. A cost extension has been granted up to 31 March 2019. A key activity of this cost extension is the completion of a 'meta-evaluation' of the LWC from 2007 to 2018. Unlike a typical mid-term or final-evaluation, the LWC Meta-evaluation assesses consortium impact, challenges and strategic direction from an aggregate, yet evidence-based perspective since its inception. Therefore, the purpose of the Meta-evaluation is not to evaluate LWC performance against specific LogFrame or donor project performance targets, but instead to provide a broader strategic analysis of LWC's mandate (and how it may have changed over time), relevance, impact at various levels and important lessons learned for both the Consortium and the Liberian WASH sector as a whole.

## I.2 META-EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The LWC Meta-evaluation has three objectives, including:

1. Evaluate the Liberia WASH Consortium at an aggregate level, since its establishment, using key programme documents and datasets as the primary source of information. Consider the mandate of the consortium, its individual projects, results indicated in available data, the context in which the consortium operates and the national policy and legal framework. Use Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>1</sup> criteria to evaluate the LWC.
2. From an analysis of the datasets produced by the Liberia WASH Consortium, generate evidence and identify trends of what works and what does not work in the provision of sustainable WASH services in Liberia.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation) Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

3. Provide recommendations for the future strategy of the consortium and programming in WASH based on findings from the meta-evaluation and review of data; to prioritise international best practice, the strategic targeting of available resources, and implications for the policy and structural environment governing WASH provision in Liberia.

### **I.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

Based upon OECD-DAC (mentioned above) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, the AO Evaluation Team will use a mixed-methods approach to explore the added value of the Liberia WASH Consortium to the WASH sector in Liberia, and any key lessons WASH sector actors may draw from the Consortium experience.

Additionally, the AO evaluation team will answer key questions according to OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, including:

**Relevance:** Extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.

- To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid?
- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

**Effectiveness:** Extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.

- To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

**Efficiency:** Measures the outputs - qualitative and quantitative - in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results and is closely related to the value for money assessment. This analysis generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.

- Were activities cost-efficient?
- Were objectives achieved on time?
- Was the programme or project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

**Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators. Our examination will be concerned with both intended and unintended results and include the positive and negative impact of external factors, such as political stability, conflict, etc.

- What has happened as a result of the programme or project?
- What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries?
- How many people have been affected?

**Sustainability:** Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.

- To what extent did the benefits of a programme or project continue after donor funding ceased?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?

## 1.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

The ET gathered data and information from detailed document review, compiling and review of existing data sets, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions will provide context and primary evidence to triangulate findings, conclusions and recommendations from the review and analysis of existing Liberia WASH Consortium (LWC) reports and data sets.

Data collection methods will include:

1. *Document Review*: Prior to deployment for fieldwork, the AO will review and analyze program documents to implement a review and assessment of quantitative data related to project performance, and/or baseline survey results. See Activity I below;
2. *Key Informant Interviews (KII)*: The Evaluation Team Leader will conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to gauge project effectiveness, identify key lessons learned, and will be used to triangulate reported data in project reports, identify intended and unintended impacts. AO uses an “evolving subject-driven” format for KIIs, which refers to an iterative process that allows for an open conversation with stakeholders while adhering to a basic format so that information gathered across interviews, can be aggregated and analyzed in a cohesive and consistent manner;<sup>2</sup>
3. *Focus Group Discussions (FGD)*: AO will organize FGDs for specific stakeholder groups with 8-10 participants per focus group. Stakeholder groups include community members, WASH Committee members, local government officials, private service providers (e.g. spare parts suppliers), and consortium partners;
4. *Site Visits and Observations*: Site visits will provide context to information included in project reports, datasets, etc., especially from intended beneficiaries and local government authorities.

Next, data analysis methods that the Evaluation Team will employ include:

*Content Analysis*: Content analysis entailed AO’s intensive review of KII and FGD data to identify and highlight notable examples of project successes (or lack of successes) that contributed to or did not contribute to goal and objectives. Content analysis is a well-established, credible and systematic technique for analyzing qualitative data that compresses many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding and then identifies patterns among the codes. Content analysis allowed the Evaluation Team to draw inferences from qualitative data by objectively and systematically identifying specific themes and sub-themes within the data and assessing their relative importance in answering the evaluation questions.

*Trend Analysis*: The ET examined indicators over time to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of activity outputs and outcomes toward stated objectives.

*Gender Analysis*: The Evaluation Team also worked across all project objectives and activities to capture and compare the results of the project as it specifically benefited (or did not benefit) girls and boys. All

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<sup>2</sup> King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sydney Verba “*Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*” Princeton University Press, 2016



data collected through its KIIs, FGDs, and mini-surveys will be disaggregated by gender and analyzed for effects on female beneficiaries.

## 1.5 FIELD WORK EXECUTION

Meta-evaluation field work took place between March 4 and March 9, 2019, with the Meta-Evaluation Validation Workshop taking place on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The Team Leader departed Liberia on Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. See Annex B: Agenda and Contact. The ET Team Leader, accompanied by LWC staff conducted the following key informant interviews during the data collection and field work period:

### Key stakeholders interviewed in Monrovia include:

National WASH Commission  
 National Coordination Technical Unit (CLTS, Ministry of Health)  
 LWC Consortium Coordination Team (CCT) (Oxfam)  
 UNICEF  
 Irish Aid  
 LWC Partners

### Site Observations and Field Visits

The ET begin site observations in Montserrado County outside of Monrovia, then travelled to Grand Cape Mount followed by field visits in Grand Bassa. Due to time and resource constraints, the ET was not able to visit LWC project sites in River Cess or Sinoe counties. Table I lists the type of field visits and site observations by county completed by the ET. Site visits outside of Monrovia took place over three days. In rural Montserrado, the ET visited two community waterpoints (hand pumps) and two communal latrines. In Grand Cape Mount, the ER visited two school WASH locations, three community water points (including one community tap), one household latrine (part of LWC CLTS) activity and interviewed a local hand pump spare parts dealer). The ET also visited one waterpoint (hand pump), two supply chain actors (a pump mechanic entrepreneur and a spare parts dealer), two communities where the LWC has recently (2018) implemented CLTS activities.

Table I: Evaluation Team site visits by type and county.

Intervention Type	Location (County)		
	Montserrado	Grand Cape Mount	Grand Bassa
<b>Water Point</b>	2	3	1
<b>Supply Chain</b>	0	1	2
<b>Community Latrine</b>	2	0	0
<b>School WASH</b>	0	2	0
<b>CLTS</b>	0	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### Prevailing WASH Conditions in Liberia

Although important progress toward improved water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions during the fifteen years since the end of the Second Liberian Civil War, access to quality WASH services in Liberia remains limited. According to 2017 Joint Monitoring Report (JMP) data, 42% of Liberians do not have access to improved drinking water sources (of any kind), and 31% practice open defecation. The situation is more dire in rural areas, with 53% having no access to improved drinking water and open defecation rates of 43%. Adoption of good handwashing practices is also limited with 38% of all Liberians having no access to hand-washing facilities (54% with no access in rural areas).<sup>3</sup> Poor WASH conditions in Liberia are driven by several factors, including high-population density in urban areas (e.g., West Point), poor WASH governance (budget allocation, capacity of government WASH officials)<sup>4</sup> at national-, county-, and community-levels. Although evidence demonstrates that development organizations are achieving positive outcomes in target intervention areas, declining humanitarian aid budgets, especially for WASH, has narrowed geographic coverage, penetration rates in areas where WASH practitioners are working, and shorter implementation timelines that constrain long-term sustainability. Shorter project timelines (often one-year) encourages many development organizations to focus on hardware (physical infrastructure such as hand pumps, bricks and mortar latrines, community hand taps, etc.) at the expense of more difficult behavior change initiatives that require time and follow-up to sustain impact.

Structural gender inequalities are deep-seated in the Liberian context. These are reflected in discriminatory customary laws, unequal access and control over resources, including ownership of productive assets and inheritance customs, unequal division of labour, and shortcomings in meaningful participation of women in decision making at household, community and national levels. There are also specific harmful practices (e.g., sexual and gender-based violence) that are not addressed by the security sector due to limited capacity to address women's protection issues; these risks are frequently raised in beneficiary consultations on the implementation of WASH projects. The uneven power dynamics existing between men and women leave women and girls disproportionately affected by shock events, as demonstrated during the EVD outbreak in both countries in 2014 and 2015.<sup>5</sup> Although the total number of EVD infections did not show a significant disproportionate effect between genders (49% male, 51% female with a similar gender ratio for the population as a whole), there have been disparities in the associated impacts on men and women. Women have fewer marketable skills and are generally less educated, restricting their income generation options in large part to petty trade (42.6%) and food processing (19.3%).<sup>6</sup> Not only are these lower paying forms of employment than the more skilled jobs that men take, but they were also more vulnerable to the conditions created by the EVD outbreak. Women often take the role of primary care givers for unwell family members, yet they are not necessarily those making decisions about their care or have means to ensure their families are able to exercise safe hygiene practices.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Joint Monitoring Program, country data for Liberia, WHO/UNICEF, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Key Informant Interview with National WASH Commission, March 3, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Korkoyah and Wreh (Apr 2015): Revealed – An Assessment of the Impact of Ebola on Men and Women in Liberia. With support from UNDP, Oxfam, Ministry of Gender, Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, and the Liberia WASH Consortium.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> This important paragraph is from the LWC proposal to Irish Aid for the December 2017 to December 2018 project performance period (file name: Proposal\_Consolidated\_FinL).

### 3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the ET considers the findings and conclusions of the Meta-Evaluation of the LWC to be robust, the study does have limitations.

#### **Timeline and Scope**

The scope (see Annex A: Terms of Reference) for the Meta-evaluation is comprehensive and wide-ranging. Conducting an evaluation of a twelve-year consortium with multiple donors, partners, and evolving activities and objectives is ambitious. Due to its current contract period of performance (ending March 31, 2019) and resources available to fund the meta evaluation, the entire Level of Effort (LOE) for this engagement was 16 days including three days of desk review (see Section 6: Citations and References), ten days in-country including field work, stakeholder interviews, and the Validation Workshop, and three days to draft and finalize this report. This short timeline precluded the ET's ability to visit projects of each partner and limited the overall number of key informant interviews and site visits (see Table I for the list of interviews and site visits conducted by the ET).

#### **Limited Sample Size**

Given the limited engagement timeline, the ET was not able to survey/interviews a statistically significant sample of LWC projects and field interventions. However, the ET was able to engage with the most relevant stakeholders for the Consortium and the Liberian WASH sector generally (see Section 2.5: Field Work Execution). Additionally, the ET implemented an aggressive interview site visit schedule during, completing ten key informant interviews in Monrovia and conducted 16 site visits over a five-day period. The ET has a high-degree of confidence in the accuracy and robustness of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Meta-evaluation, but the limited sample size (even if representative) potentially introduces bias into meta-evaluation analyses.

#### **Data Collection Bias**

In addition to the limitations listed above, ET data collection methodologies have two potential biases, including:

**Halo Bias** - Key informants and FGD participants may have underreported socially undesirable answers and altered their responses in accordance with what they perceive as prevailing social norms. The extent to which these informants are prepared to reveal their true opinions may also vary for some questions that call upon the respondents to assess the performance of their colleagues or people on whom they depend upon for provision of services. The ET mitigated halo bias through extensive use of probing questions, and posing questions in a manner designed to mitigate reference to socially undesirable situations or norms, and to avoid assigning culpability to specific individuals or groups.

**Subjective Measurements** - Qualitative approaches can result in performance analysis being dependent on the professional opinions and experience of the ET. This, in turn, may result in conclusions, and recommendations that are based upon the ET's subjective interpretation of findings. The ET mitigated this bias by systematically triangulating findings across stakeholder groups questions and reference to project documents, as well as by drawing on expert opinion where possible.

#### **Potential Conflict of Interest**

Absolute Options LLC (AO), the consulting firm contracted for this study has previously worked for Concern Worldwide, Oxfam GB, and collaborated with WaterAid on other consulting assignments, program evaluations, and business development initiatives in various countries. As professional program evaluators, AO prides itself on providing independent, unbiased analyses for clients, but the long-term

business relationship between AO and this organizations could present a potential for bias when evaluating quality of work. AO and the LWC worked to mitigate this potential bias by conducting a Validation Workshop with LWC partner organizations and external stakeholders on March 11, 2019 at the conclusion of meta-evaluation field work. The Validation Workshop created the opportunity for partners and stakeholders to ground-truth Evaluation Team findings and conclusion. Feedback from workshop participants has been incorporated into ET preliminary findings.

## 4. FINDINGS

This section describes key findings of the Meta-evaluation, first according to DAC criteria, then findings of positive impact of the consortium, and finally a discussion of key lessons learned.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that this section describes findings only, and that conclusions from information collected are explored in Section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations.

### 4.1 EVALUATION FINDINGS ACCORDING TO DAC CRITERIA

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) outlines five criteria for evaluating development programs, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The ET conducted key informant interviews and site visits with DAC criteria incorporated into interview questions. Findings per criteria are summarized below.

#### Relevance

This criterion refers to “the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.” Interviews with public sector actors and other international organizations engaged in WASH programming in Liberia clearly indicated that the LWC has been extremely relevant to the needs and priorities of the Liberian people, donors, and increasingly the Republic of Liberia. According to UNICEF, the “Consortium” provided a credible and organized platform for donor investment to improve WASH services at a critical time just after the conclusion of the War.”<sup>9</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Irish Aid, which noted that the fledgling Liberian government was struggling to provide almost every kind of public service, and WASH was not an immediate priority at the time (2007-2009) despite tremendous need.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, by organizing themselves into a consortium, participating organizations created a platform that facilitated funding agreements from donors, as a single award could fund good work by multiple organizations.<sup>11</sup> The relevance of Consortium activities has also been evident by the exceptional influence the Consortium has had on Liberian public policy for WASH. Consortium partners effectively mobilized civil society organizations to advocate for the drafting and adoption of the WASH Compact, and recently the establishment of the National WASH Commission (NWASHC). Additionally, the LWC helped facilitate and continues to support the WASH caucus<sup>12</sup> within the Liberian Congress.

However, the influence of the Consortium has reportedly waned over the last three to four years, which in turn can impact LWCs relevance to public, private and civil society actors and donors.<sup>13</sup> At least three key informants interviewed (two internal to the Consortium and one external) identified reduced funding as one of the drivers of diminished influence due to fewer program events and reduced scope and activity, for example), but others cite consortium fatigue, diminished energy and enthusiasm at the consortium governance level and shifting consortium partner priorities to non-LWC initiatives/projects as reasons

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<sup>8</sup> Where appropriate, the ET cites specific key informant interviews and/or site visits. In some instances where stakeholder feedback might be sensitive, the ET cites non-specific primary research references.

<sup>9</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> The WASH Caucus is a group of legislators committed to promoting WASH issues including improved policies and regulations and securing national budget for public WASH investments.

<sup>13</sup> Key informant interviews, Monrovia, March 3 – 5, 2019.

why LWC influence may be decreasing.<sup>14</sup> However, several stakeholders (both internal and external) commented that the LWC is still very well respected, and that government still looks to the LWC (and UNICEF) for key input and involvement in new public sector initiatives. One stakeholder said, “if the LWC and UNICEF do not participate in WASH initiative or event, the event lacks credibility in the eyes of other government officials and non-consortium WASH actors.”<sup>15</sup> Interviews with government officials also stated clearly their need and desire for the LWC to take on a greater capacity development role at multiple levels of government. For example, staff at the newly established National WASH Commission freely admitted that most of their staff have little or no experience in WASH, and they need significant training to effectively fulfill their job responsibilities.<sup>16</sup> Commission staff stated that a long-term training and follow-up program is needed, not one-off trainings.<sup>17</sup> Further, LWC field staff (and one local government official) noted that while progress has been made at the national level (i.e., the WASH Compact, WASH legislation, establishment of the Commission), that WASH field staff at the County-, District-, and field-levels lack the capacity (technical, budgetary, managerial) to carry out their duties in target communities. According to KIs with LWC staff and government staff, for example, the lack of transportation resources for WASH regulatory bodies severely hinders their ability to conduct site visits, provide technical advice to communities, coordinate sector actors, and certify communities as Open Defecation Free (ODF).<sup>18</sup> As with the National WASH Commission, district-level officials are often political appointees who do not necessarily have experience and expertise in WASH. Continuous training and capacity development of local WASH officials will be required if the Republic of Liberia is to fulfill its commitments to improved WASH services throughout the country.

In its history, the LWC has successfully led the improvement of Liberian WASH services during the post-war emergency period, and later successfully guided and influenced public policy to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework governing WASH sector development in Liberia. Although these achievements are important, much work remains. As discussed in Section 2. Background and Context, Liberia is lagging necessary progress to reach WASH Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Although improving, poor WASH service delivery and WASH sector governance remain the norm in Liberia, and the mission and work of the Consortium is as relevant (perhaps more) to beneficiaries, recipients and donors than at any time in the Consortium’s history.

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. According to internal project documents<sup>19</sup> and independent evaluations, the LWC has successfully achieved its stated objectives, which have evolved over time and with different donors. However, the timing of achievement has at times been behind schedule or delayed.<sup>20</sup> Key informant interviews suggest that behavior change adoption (hand washing practices, use of household latrines, water storage, etc.) has been more challenging to achieve within originally specified implementation periods. This is not surprising given the complexity of facilitating the adoption of good WASH behaviors and given LWC’s typically short funding windows (one- or two-year donor agreements, since its inception). Despite short implementation timelines, the 2016 KAP

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with the National WASH Commission, March 3, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Key informant interviews in Monrovia on March 5, and in Grand Cape Mount on March 6, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Jones-Dimen, Anna, “The EUWF Mid-term Evaluation”, May 26, 2016; Monitoring and Evaluation Reports to DFID, ECHO, the EU and Irish AID, and 2016 KAP Surveys.

<sup>20</sup> Jones-Dimen, Anna, “The EUWF Mid-term Evaluation”, May 26, 2016, page V.

Surveys conducted as part of the EUWF Mid-term Evaluation demonstrate marked improvements of LogFrame indicators. Specifically, of 17 indicators and sub-indicators, the LWC had met or exceeded (in some cases substantially exceeded) 9 performance targets, nearly met an additional 4 indicators, and significantly failed to meet only one indicator. Achievement of three sub-indicators for EUWF Result 4: “Increased capacity of community members in the target areas to protect themselves and to prevent local Ebola transmission” could not be ascertained due to reporting units (numbers) not matching indicator units (%). The overall success in achieving EWUF indicators is but one example of LWC effectiveness. An additional example of LWC effectiveness is significant progress in the Liberian WASH policy space. LWC advocacy efforts helped put WASH improvement on the national agenda, ultimately resulting in the establishment of the NWASHC. Although national budget allocations for the NWASHC and other public WASH activities are not yet certain, LWC’s facilitation of several steps in the policy-making process leading to the NWASHC demonstrates Consortium effectiveness.

### **Efficiency**

Efficiency measures the program outputs (qualitative and quantitative) in relation to the inputs (material procurement and construction costs, for example). It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results.<sup>21</sup> LWC efficiency is more difficult to assess given the lack of cost-output data from other actors in the Liberian WASH Sector.

### **Impact**

Impact measures the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. A key objective of the Meta-evaluation is to document evidence of LWC impact. Several examples have already been mentioned in the preceding sections, but project documents, key informant interviews, and site visits suggest that the LWC has positively impacted WASH conditions in project target areas, and at the national level via policy advocacy efforts. Since its inception, the LWC has facilitated thousands of community water points, hundreds of school latrines and handwashing stations, dozens of community latrines, helped establish WASH Management Committees, trained countless beneficiaries including community members and public officials. In aggregate, LWC has improved WASH conditions for over hundreds of thousands of people in Liberia since 2007. Although these accomplishments are impressive, especially given the difficult context in Liberia and declining donor-funding of the WASH sector in recent years, a key question remains on whether and how LWC impact is long-lasting and sustainable.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability measures whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. DAC further stipulates that projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable. The Evaluation Team (ET) found that the sustainability of LWC activities has been weakened by two key factors: 1) a focus on ‘hardware’ delivery (e.g., community waterpoint construction) over ‘software’ development (sustainable development of community governance structures, adoption of good WASH behaviors, etc.). This focus has been driven in part by the donor tendency (in many developing countries) to focus on tangible outputs that can easily be measured and reported over qualitative indicators that may be less well understood by donor constituencies, more difficult to achieve and at least equally as difficult to measure. 2) short implementation timelines (one or two years) have curtailed capacity

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<sup>21</sup> DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance, downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.html> on March 17.

development and behavior change activity timelines to below what is generally accepted as minimum implementation timelines. For example, although ideal timelines to achieve sustainable behavior change results varies by the type of behavior being promoted, it is generally accepted that sustainable WASH behavior changes require at least 12 months of frequent training and messaging activities (ideally 18 months) and may require an additional 12 to 24 months of follow-on and refresher trainings to reinforce changed behaviors.<sup>22</sup> An example of insufficient capacity development required for sustainability came from Meta-Evaluation field visits whereby single 3-day trainings were provided by LWC partners to WASH Management Committee (WMC) members which failed to transfer adequate knowledge of water point operations and maintenance, economic sustainability, and improved hygiene behaviors. Of the 9 site visits conducted, only roughly 50% of WMCs could recite basic operational facts with confidence (where to buy spare parts, how to diagnose a damaged pump). Furthermore, community members struggled to quickly recall improved hygiene behaviors promoted during trainings, with nearly every community group listing hand-washing as only the third or fourth behavior they recalled from LWC trainings. Other ET site visits also found that WMCs are not collecting sufficient water user fees over time to afford future water point (or latrine) repairs and spare parts. WMCs shared water user fee ledgers with the ET, and in every case the collection of water user fees dropped off dramatically by the third month, typically when LWC partners decrease the frequency of monitoring and promotion visits to specific communities. These findings call into question the long-term sustainability of LWC hardware and hardware management investments.

The LWC has made sustainable impact in two other ways, however: effective policy advocacy and strengthening of the Liberia regulatory and legal framework government WASH service delivery, and the capacity development of local partners (CSOs and local NGOs). The LWC is in a position to leave behind a legacy of local partners capable of continuing on LWC advocacy efforts after the eventual close of Consortium activities (whether in one year or in ten years). The example of the CSO United Youth is a great example of how LWC advocacy skills and strategy capacity development resulted not only in positive policy changes, but also strengthened a youth-led civil society organization that now operates largely independently of international NGOs. LWC accomplished this by bringing in local partners into the advocacy process early, in addition to facilitating advocacy activities through local partners instead of direct implementation. A key success of this approach was the policy decision makers were more responsive to demands from local CSO's and other organizations than they would have otherwise been if LWC's international partners were directly advocating for policy change. The skills and strategies developed by LWC, and the continued relevance of local WASH actors will drive change and impact for years beyond the close of Consortium activities.

## **4.2 EVIDENCE OF LWC POSITIVE IMPACT**

This section describes Evaluation Team findings of the positive impact of the LWC over the past 12 years. These findings are based upon key informant interviews, site visits and observations, and review of key consortium M&E documents, proposals, performance reports and internal governance documents. Key informant interviews and project documents indicate Consortium impact in five thematic areas: 1) advocacy and public policy reform; 2) capacity development of local actors (especially local CSOs); 3) quality WASH service delivery in a difficult environment 4); successful creation and dissemination of

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<sup>22</sup> “Designing for Behavior Change – A practical field Guide”, USAID, TOPS, Food for the Hungry for the USAID Food for Peace Program (which has significant WASH development activities), 2017. Also, “Final Evaluation of the DRC WASH Consortium”, Absolute Options for DFID and Concern Worldwide, DR Congo, November 2018.



project learning, and 5); proof of concept for a large consortium for WASH improvement in emergency and post-emergency environments.

### **Advocacy and Public Policy Impact**

When asked to describe the biggest impact achieved by the consortium, key informants consistently listed LWC's advocacy work and impact on WASH policy in Liberia.<sup>23</sup> The LWC has been instrumental in securing a place for WASH issues on the national policy agenda. This was accomplished through grass-roots advocacy, which engaged local CSOs to mobilize community members to pressure legislators to put WASH issues on the national agenda. LWC also actively engaged public agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Public Works in project learning events, monthly cluster meetings and technical working groups<sup>24</sup>, opening ceremonies and public-private dialogue sessions (e.g., the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Joint Sector Review)<sup>25</sup>. The LWC also contributed technical language to the drafting of key government documents and policies such as the WASH Sector Strategic Plan, the Water Compact, and the National WASH Commission Act. LWC efforts also resulted in the establishment of a regulatory agency (the National WASH Commission). Per program documents, however, "prioritization of WASH remains a great concern; the WASH sector is still ranked a negligible sixth position in the National High Priority Level Projects. Under the current national budget 2018-2019, there are no specific lines for WASH by the different line Ministries or agencies."<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the establishment of the National WASH Commission, the LWC advocacy efforts also facilitated the development of a legislative WASH caucus WASH Secretariat. These advocacy groups within the Government of Liberia help "strengthen WASH governance and ensure accountability".<sup>27</sup> Specifically, the WASH Caucus "maintains and promotes the prioritization of WASH issues on the national legislative agenda, including the increase of funding for WASH investments and specific WASH budget line items in national annual budgets".<sup>28</sup>

Finally, an additional ET finding is that while LWC advocacy efforts have been quite successful, much more work needs to be done. First, adequate public funding and budget allocation for the WASH sector remains low. The absence of specific line items within national budgets jeopardizes the availability of funds to the sector, as aggregate budget allocations can more easily be shifted away from WASH investments to other budget priorities. Second, insufficient public sector funding hinders the ability of public agencies to effectively participate in joint monitoring efforts. The lack of budget for vehicles, fuel, and government staff per diems limits the frequency of government monitoring visits.<sup>29</sup> Next, although the National WASH Commission has been formally established, the appointment of agency staff is still incomplete, and appointees to date largely do not have WASH technical or governance skills.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, key informants

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<sup>23</sup> Key informant interviews with Oxfam, WaterAid, United Youth (local CSO), and Concern Worldwide, March 3 - 5, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Irish Aid 7 Interim Narrative Report: Strengthening Sustainability in Schools and Communities", Liberia WASH Consortium, July 3, 2018, page 15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., page 5.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Key informant interviews, National Coordination Unit and the National WASH Committee, March 3, 2019

<sup>30</sup> Key informant interview, National WASH Committee, March 3, 2019.

report that despite progress at the national-level, the capacity and accountability of County and local WASH officials remain low. For example, the ET attempted to meet with County and District WASH officials in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa through multiple contact attempts, and in each case either the local WASH official could not be reached or was away from their post in Monrovia.<sup>31</sup> These findings do not call into question the efficacy of LWC advocacy efforts in recent years, but instead speak to the continued relevance and importance of the Consortium's work.

### **Capacity Building of Local Actors**

The next area of Consortium impact is the capacity development and mobilization of local actors, including local CSOs, WASH Management Committees, School Health Clubs, Parent Teacher Associations and local spare parts dealers and operations and maintenance technicians. Key informant interviews and program documents highlight the impact of LWC efforts to develop and mobilize local CSOs. These efforts included trainings on organizational management and governance, organizational development planning, financial management and compliance systems, technical trainings (i.e., construction quality, advocacy strategies, training of trainers for hygiene promotion, etc.), and community mobilization. An example of LWC impact on local CSOs is the development and success of the United Youth for Peace, Education, Transparency and Development of Liberia (UYPEDL). UYPEDL leadership clearly communicated their mission, objectives, activities, and the importance of LWC training and support over the past several years. In particular, UYPEDL representatives cited LWC advocacy and community mobilization trainings as a key success factor contributing to the establishment of the WASH Compact, the National WASH Commission, and the legislative WASH caucus. UYPEDL community mobilization efforts were so effective that presidential candidates, including the current President of Liberia George Weah, signed commitments to prioritize WASH issues on the national legislative agenda.<sup>32</sup>

Next, implementation of LWC activities through local NGOs and other organizations has helped build local technical and project management capacity. For example, ACF works with local partner Ground Water Exploration, Inc. (GWEI), Tear Fund works with the Association of Evangelical of Liberia (AEL), and WaterAid with Community Development Services (CODES).<sup>33</sup> ET interviews with technical staff from GWEI and AEL<sup>34</sup> indicate that LWC training and financial support has developed strong project management and technical skills of both organizations. Although the ET was not able to interview local partner CODES, the ET found CODES infrastructure projects to be high-quality.<sup>35</sup> Despite Consortium progress in developing local partner capacity, areas for improvement remain (see Section 5.3: Areas for Improvement and Lessons Learned).

The LWC has had success developing the capacity of other local actors, groups and organizations such as Community WASH Management Committees (WMCs), School Health Clubs, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and supply chain actors such as spare parts dealers and operations and maintenance technicians. Although a significant capacity gaps remain (see Section 5.3) both in terms of capacity levels of better-performing local actors and the uniformity of capacity development across all local actors,

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<sup>31</sup> Evaluation Team Observation.

<sup>32</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Irish Aid 7 Interim Narrative Report: Strengthening Sustainability in Schools and Communities", Liberia WASH Consortium, July 3, 2018, page 14.

<sup>34</sup> Key informant interviews, March 4 and March 5, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Site visit, Cape Mount, March 6, 2019.

evidence of LWC impact on local actors from specific site observations deserves recognition. Of the six WMCs interviewed by the ET, 50% demonstrated adequate water point management skills. While a 50% success rate might not be considered a success in other contexts, the fact that the Consortium catalyzed the development of sustainable organizations, groups and actors in 50% of randomly selected sites should be considered an achievement.<sup>36</sup> Evidence of successful LWC capacity development efforts of WMCs include: 1) water point was operational at the time of the ET site visit; 2) the WMC was collecting sufficient water user fees to at least cover basic operations/maintenance activities and repairs; 3) the WMC conducted meetings on a regular (usually monthly) basis and 4) WMC members were capable of describing their mission and specific job responsibilities. Next, the ET visited two School WASH sites<sup>37</sup>, each demonstrating active school health clubs and student knowledge of good hygiene practices. Although each site faced operational challenges (described in Section 5.3), school administrators demonstrated at least adequate knowledge of their WASH responsibilities and how WASH infrastructure should ideally be maintained. Further, during these same site visits, representatives of local PTAs were actively engaged in ET interviews and clearly an interest in and understanding of their roles in maintaining good school WASH conditions. These interviews provide evidence of the successful linkage of PTA to Consortium school WASH activities.<sup>38</sup> Lastly, the ET found evidence of LWC success building the capacity of local supply chain actors. As with capacity levels of WMCs, the ET also found sustainability and capacity development challenges for local actors (see Section 5.3), but two cases demonstrate LWC impact and the opportunity for impact at scale in the future. First, the ET interviewed a hand pump spare parts dealer in Grand Bassa that maintained significant stocking levels of spare parts. Although the dealer cited low turn-over and exchange rate fluctuations as challenges, the diversity of his other business lines (hard ware, repair services) allowed the dealer to continue spare parts sales even with lower-than-expected demand.<sup>39</sup> The dealer specifically mentioned LWC training on the types and quantities of spare parts that should be stocked to meet potential WMC demand needs. The second example of LWC impact developing the capacity of local supply chain actors is a community pump technician that has begun charging fees for water point diagnostics and repair services. Trained initially in 2017, this technician began responding to requests from neighboring communities to help them determine hand pump break downs and repair requirements in September 2018. The technician has now helped approximately six nearby communities and has plans to invest in a motorbike to expand his coverage area. Although income from these services is modest in absolute terms, the additional money from operations and maintenance activities increased his income by almost a third over what he earned prior to LWC training in pump maintenance and repair.<sup>40</sup>

### **Quality WASH Service Delivery in a Difficult Environment**

Although an aggregate number of all WASH infrastructure sites constructed by the Consortium was not accessible by the ET at the time of the evaluation, site visits in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, and Grand Bassa demonstrated high-quality design and construction work (e.g., “hardware”). Although examples of disrepair and non-functionality were also observed, these cases appear to be caused by poor maintenance and inadequate technical skills (e.g., “software”). Design and construction quality was evident

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<sup>36</sup> ET site visits in Montserrado (March 6), Cape Mount (March 7-8), and Gran Bassa (March 9, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Site visit and key informant interviews, Gran Cape Mount, March 7-8, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Also, see Section 4: Limitation of the Study regarding the robustness of findings derived from a limited sample of project sites, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

<sup>39</sup> Key informant interview, March 9, 2019. See Section 5.3 for further detail about challenges facing LWC-supported spare parts dealers.

<sup>40</sup> Key informant interview, March 9, 2019.

across various WASH infrastructure projects including water points, community latrines, and school WASH facilities. The ability of the Consortium to consistently deliver high-quality work in the difficult Liberian context (donor funding challenges, low government and community capacity levels) is especially impressive.

### **Thought Leadership and Learning Dissemination**

According to key informant interviews with external stakeholders (i.e., UNICEF, NASHC), the LWC quickly established itself as a thought leader for Liberian WASH challenges after the launch of Consortium activities in 2008.<sup>41</sup> By creating a funding and activity delivery platform, the LWC positioned itself as one of two lead actors in the Liberian WASH sector (together with UNICEF), especially given the inability of the new government to address WASH issues in the immediate post-war period. This positioning generated a significant convening power, which enabled the Consortium to effectively engage donor representatives, government officials and other NGOs in policy discussions, strategic planning, and learning events. Although its thought leadership position has waned in the last two- to three-years (see Section 5.3), the LWC is still considered a key actor in the sector, as evidenced by its recent success promoting policy reform (2015 – 2018).<sup>42</sup>

LWC thought leadership was solidified in large part by effective dissemination of project learnings and studies, sponsorship of sector working groups, and engagement of national and local government partners in project events (i.e., Community Health Team (CHT) trainings, opening ceremonies, discussion roundtables, etc.). For example, the June 2009 DFID Annual Review notes, “The Consortium is supporting MoHSW to develop a collection and assessment tool to establish a country-wide WASH database. Coordination and supervision of activities is through County Health Teams supported by the Consortium and MoHSW. These actions have resulted in MoHSW relocating staff from Monrovia to rural areas.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the Consortium commissioned several studies contributing to the technical knowledge in the sector, including an assessment of sanitation conditions in Liberian urban slums (2010)<sup>44</sup>, a hydrological study for small towns in Liberia (2014)<sup>45</sup>, and a comprehensive gender analysis (2017)<sup>46</sup>, to name a few. Lastly, several key informants mentioned that Peer Review learning events were especially useful as participants shared lessons learned, key success factors, and discussed new approaches to inform improved Consortium program activities.<sup>47</sup>

### **Longevity and Proof of Consortium Concept for WASH**

Lastly, the fact that the LWC is entering its twelfth year demonstrates the Consortium’s historical and continued impact. Although the Consortium has lost momentum over the past two to three years (see Section 5.3: Areas for Improvement and Lessons Learned for details), its ability to continue activities in a

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<sup>41</sup> Key informant interviews, March 3, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019. Also, the passage of legislation establishing the National WASH Commission (August 2017) and legislative WASH Caucus and Secretariat.

<sup>43</sup> “WASH Consortium DFID Annual Review” Liberia WASH Consortium, June 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Woods, Lisa, “

<sup>45</sup> “Liberia Small Towns: Consultancy Services for Hydrological Investigations – Inception Report”, Subterranean Water Experts, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> “Comprehensive Gender Analysis Report”, Liberian WASH Consortium, January 2017.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Stephen, Cathy, “Liberia WASH Consortium 2013 Peer Learning Review”, Liberia WASH Consortium, April 2013.

difficult funding environment highlights the Consortium's continued relevance and impact. Additionally, the LWC consortium model has been replicated elsewhere (i.e., Sierra Leone and the DR Congo). Early LWC success and impact provided a "proof of concept" that the consortium model is an effective funding and delivery vehicle for donors wanting to invest in WASH, especially in fragile states.<sup>48</sup>

### **4.3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Although program documents, key informant interviews and site visits clearly demonstrate significant positive impact of the Consortium over the past 12 years, the ET also found several opportunities to strengthen Consortium activities and improve program quality. Areas for improvement (and associated lessons learned) include: 1) negative consequences of short-term funding and implementation timelines; 2) sustainability of LWC activities and initiatives; 3) consortium fatigue and loss of momentum; 4) Consortium Governance and 5) Communications, Branding and Outreach.

#### **Funding and Implementation Timelines and Sustainability of Program Initiatives**

LWC funding has typically been through one- or two-year funding agreements with donors, including DFID, ECHO, and Irish Aid. Over the past four years, the Consortium has been operating on one-year funding agreements. While the tenacity of the Consortium in pursuing annual funding, and the support of Irish Aid, should be commended, the short funding cycles have negatively impacted the quality and sustainability of LWC's work.

For example, based upon evidence from other WASH programs, including the DRC WASH Consortium (funded by DFID in the DR Congo), WASH behavior change activities (good hygiene, sustainable water point management, CLTS, etc.) requires at least 12 – 18 months of constant interaction and training of community members. In fact, a recent evaluation of the DRC WASH Consortium reported that community members, program staff members and government officials in the DR Congo uniformly asked that WASH behavior programming continue for 24 months, with periodic refresher trainings (every six months) after that. For Liberia, focus group discussions with LWC WASH committees and community members echoed the need for more intensive capacity building and technical training activities.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, when pressed by the ET to describe what they learned from LWC trainings, WASH committee members struggled to list specific topics, usually mentioned three or four topics out of more than ten topics included in trainings.<sup>50</sup> The ET acknowledges that the ability of rural community members to describe technical trainings in detail may be difficult due to cultural and in some cases language issues. However, WASH committees and community members reported that they only received one training on WASH committee governance and management and good hygiene practices. Even though the single training may have taken place over several days, a single, one-off training on difficult behavior change and WASH committee management topics is far from global best practice.

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<sup>48</sup> Evaluation Team observation.

<sup>49</sup> Key informant interviews in Montserrado (March 5), Gran Cape Mount (March 6 – 7), and Gran Bassa (March 8, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Interviews with LWC technical staff indicate that the limited time devoted to ‘software’ capacity building was largely driven by the pressure to deliver outputs associate with single-year contracts.<sup>51</sup> Staff members reported that they felt pressure to “qualify” villages for water points in some cases before they had met pre-specified criteria in order to meet water point installation targets. The ET witnessed a similar impact on CLTS methodology implementation conducted by the LWC, whereby the duration and frequency of CLTS trainings were compressed in order to facilitate faster Open Defecation Free (ODF) certification by the NCTU. Insufficient CLTS training increases the risk of ‘back-sliding’, although the ET did not directly observe instances where previously ODF-certified villages had failed to maintain ODF practices. However, the ET did observe several instances where WASH infrastructure had fallen into disrepair. For example, one water point in Montserrat County was not functional. Upon investigation, the hand pump only required a simple U-seal replacement. The WASH committee pump technician had surmised that the well was dry, which, according to LWC staff was not likely given the depth of the well and listed recharge rate.<sup>52</sup> Another example, from Grand Cape Mount, involved a school WASH activity. The hand pump at the school had not been functional for three months (constructed in August 2017). As with the Montserrat example, the local pump technician cited a lack of water as the reason for water point malfunction. Again, the hand pump only needed a U-seal replacement. In this example, the PTA had been consistently collecting contributions for water point maintenance from community members and had plenty of funds for the spare part and repair. The school principle was aware that a spare parts dealer (who had U-seals on hand) was located only three villages away. If the pump technician had adequate technical knowledge, the problem could have been diagnosed immediately, the spare part procured, and the repair completed within a day. Instead, the pump lay idle for three months, depriving school children easy access to clean water, which also required students to bring water from home or other sources throughout the school day.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 1: A non-functional hand pump in Montserrat County constructed in July 2017.



Figure 2: Non-functional School hand pump requiring only a U-seal replacement (Grand Cape Mount, March 6, 2019).

The primary lesson learned from key informant interview and site observations is that single-year funding increases the focus on physical outputs (e.g., water points) over adequate capacity building required for the long-term sustainability of LWC activities.

### **Consortium Fatigue and Loss of Momentum**

Several stakeholders including Consortium partners, technical staff, the CCT, and UNICEF noted that the LWC has lost momentum over the

<sup>51</sup> Key informant interview with LWC field staff, March 6, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Site visit, March 5, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Site visit, March 6, 2019.

past two- to three-years. Some cited funding challenges, which certainly has impacted the volume and frequency of LWC activities, while others noted shifting organizational and donor priorities (away from WASH). One key informant noted that the Consortium is now the third or fourth priority for Consortium members versus the 2007-2012 period when the LWC provided the majority of funding for most Consortium partners. However, a key question involves the causality of decreasing Consortium relevance and funding – which factor is causing the other?

Other stakeholders mentioned that despite LWC advocacy successes, the LWC may be suffering from ‘consortium fatigue’, whereby after years of forward progress and various successes, Consortium partners, even with staff and leadership turnover, grow weary of a long-standing institutional arrangement.<sup>54</sup> In the case of the LWC, a lack of reflection on its mission, relevance to the changing reality of the Liberian WASH sector, and diminished energy and enthusiasm has likely contributed to the Consortium’s momentum loss. Short-term funding cycles, which involve a rapid cycle of proposal writing, evaluation, reporting, and yet more proposal writing, may also contribute to consortium fatigue. Although the LWC recently reviewed and updated its five-year strategic plan twice in the past three years, the strategy documents look largely similar, despite evolving needs and challenges of WASH in Liberia. These documents, and comments from stakeholders, suggest that the Consortium has become reactive to donor requests and requirements, instead of objectively assessing WASH sector needs in the process of developing and implementing relevant long-term strategies. As a representative of Irish Aid stated, “it is the responsibility of the Consortium to inform us what is possible and most appropriate in response to our stated objectives. We may not always know the best solution or strategy to address challenges identified.”<sup>55</sup>

The lesson learned is that the LWC and its members need to focus on its long-term strategic mission given evolving WASH sector challenges independently of donor priorities. Better alignment of Consortium objectives and activities with current and anticipated needs of the Liberian WASH sector will increase the relevance of the Consortium, increase its value proposition, and increase partner energy and enthusiasm for the Consortium. This in turn, will likely increase donor interest as the Consortium regains momentum and relevance.

### **Consortium Governance**

Several stakeholders mentioned the need for improved Consortium governance as an important area needing attention. Feedback from key informant interviews was uniformly positive regarding the dedication and hard work of current and recent CCT staff members. However, several concerns were raised by both Consortium partners and Irish Aid.<sup>56</sup>

First, stakeholders stated that human resource/staffing decisions (hiring and firing of CCT personnel) needs to remain the purview of the LWC Board, not the agency hosting the CCT. One respondent stated, “continuity of Consortium leadership has been disrupted on at least one occasion [in the past two years] when the lead agency released the CCT Consortium Coordinator without consulting the donor and the

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<sup>54</sup> Key informant interviews, March 3 and 4, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Comment from IrishAid representative at the Meta-Evaluation Validation Workshop, March 11, 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Specific attribution is avoided in this section, as key informants were speaking on the condition of anonymity.

LWC Board.”<sup>57</sup> Another stakeholder mentioned that high CCT turn-over has hurt LWC momentum, creating a leadership void.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, the continued under-staffing of funding CCT positions, according to one stakeholder, “constrains the CCT ability to effectively lead the Consortium and may create problems with donor confidence.”<sup>59</sup> The ET was able to confirm that of four funded positions (Consortium Coordinator, WASH and Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Adviser, and a Communications/Advocacy Manager), only 1.5 positions were staffed at the time of the Meta-evaluation. For example, the CCT Consortium Coordinator’s time is split between the LWC and lead agency WASH programming (independent of the LWC). This is despite the fact that the position has been fully funded under previous donor agreements. The M&E position was staffed 100% time, but the vacancy of the other two posts creates an enormous workload on this individual.<sup>60</sup> The continued vacancy of the CCT Advocacy/Communications position is particularly troubling as advocacy has historically been a key area of LWC impact, and the recent lack of consistent outreach and a coherent communications strategy has contributed to the Consortium’s loss of momentum and relevance over the past two- to three-years.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, more than one stakeholder mentioned that the LWC lead agency may also have grown weary of CCT responsibilities, and that competing demands on staff time and a shift in the strategic direction of the lead agency may be contributing to a loss of energy and strategic direction at the CCT level.<sup>62</sup> This finding is more subjective, but the negative impact of competing priorities of not only the lead agency, but also Consortium partners, was clearly evident to the ET in key informant interviews.<sup>63</sup>

### **Consortium Identity and Value Proposition**

Another issue raised by stakeholders in key informant interviews was a concern that annual pursuit of continued funding from a single donor has caused a drift from the Consortium’s core identity and value proposition.<sup>64</sup> The example cited by some interviewees was the current proposal for additional funding from Irish Aid. Irish Aid has communicated its desire to achieve more impact in nutritional outcomes in Liberia, and has asked for a proposal focusing on nutrition-sensitive WASH. Some respondents felt that the Consortium’s proposal focused too much on nutrition and not enough on basic WASH, which, as one informant put it, “impact nutritional outcomes in and of itself.”<sup>65</sup> The stakeholder cited the reduction in water-borne diseases that impact the uptake of nutrients in young children and the reduction in environmental enteropathy as example of how “traditional” WASH impacts nutritional outcomes.

While the desire to be responsive to donor objectives is understandable (and necessary), movement away from a Consortium’s core value proposition increases the risk that the Consortium’s primary purpose, and the rationale for partner involvement, erodes as the Consortium seeks to secure funding in a

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<sup>57</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> ET observation.

<sup>61</sup> Key informant interview, March 3, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> Key informant interview, March 4, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Key informant interviews, March 3 – 5, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019.



challenging donor environment. This erosion may also lessen the value proposition of the Consortium to other donors who may otherwise be interested in funding the Consortium for basic WASH activities, which are clearly still very much needed in Liberia.<sup>66</sup> Lastly, Irish Aid clearly stated that they were not expecting a nutrition proposal from the LWC, but instead nutrition-sensitive WASH, and that they expect the LWC to educate them on what is most feasible given the Consortium's strategic direction and purpose.<sup>67</sup>

### Communications, Branding and Outreach

Lastly, stakeholders reported a reduction in the frequency and profile of Consortium outreach and communication events.<sup>68</sup> While this is likely tied to reduced funding, communications and outreach is critical to maintain relevance and to attract increased funding. The ET found that while the Consortium continues to participate in sector technical working groups and WASH cluster meetings, production of learning and outreach materials, the number and profile of learning events, and sponsorship of discussion roundtables/dialogue events has decreased over the past three years.<sup>69</sup> The ET also observed inconsistent and outdated branding that may be hindering the public profile of the LWC. For example, site visits to Consortium partner projects (funded by the LWC) highlighted incorrect branding of LWC-funded projects (see Figure 3). Correct branding should resemble the example in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Example of incorrect branding of LWC-funded projects.



Figure 3: Example of correct branding of LWC-funded projects.



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<sup>66</sup> ET Observation.

<sup>67</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019 and feedback during the March 11 Meta-evaluation Validation Workshop.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Key informant interview, March 5, 2019 and review of program documents, specifically IrishAid reports (IrishAid numbers 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Lastly, the Consortium logo (with the single water drop) needs to be refreshed and updated.<sup>70</sup>

Figure 5: Current LWC logo.



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<sup>70</sup> ET observation.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon Meta-evaluation findings and lessons learned, the following section presents recommendations to strengthen the quality of LWC programming, re-energize the Consortium and to increase its long-term sustainability.

### 5.1 RE-ENERGIZE AND RE-LAUNCH

The LWC has earned a strong reputation for quality programming and thought leadership in the Liberian WASH sector. The Consortium continues to have a strong convening power and an institutional legacy that can serve as a solid foundation for a resurgence. Given the continued myriad challenges of the WASH sector in Liberia (i.e., limited capacity of government agencies, local WASH staff, insecure public funding and millions of people still lacking access to basic WASH services), the Consortium's current and future work is as relevant as it was at its inception. In order to translate the relevance of its work into relevance as a vibrant, strategic organization, the LWC should consider the following steps to revitalize the Consortium:

**Rebrand.** Before the LWC tackles more challenging organizational structure and governance challenges, the Consortium can refresh its logo, develop a branding and marking guide for Consortium members and implementing partners. A fresh brand and logo will help communicate to the broader Liberian WASH sector that the LWC is reinvigorated and can raise the profile of project activities, learning and advocacy events and participation in sector forums and conferences. The DRC WASH project for example, designed a modern logo and branding guide that is now known by government, NGO, and community stakeholders throughout the DR Congo.



**Re-launch.** Upon re-branding, the LWC should host a public “re-launch” event to outline its 2018 – 2023 strategy, Consortium objectives, and upcoming activities. The event should include key sector stakeholders to discuss current and anticipated challenges facing the Liberian WASH sector, with LWC participants highlighting how the LWC plans to address those challenges.

**Re-establish a core identity.** The Consortium's biggest area of impact to date has been its success advocating for WASH policy reform and government action. Given the myriad challenges facing the Liberian public sector, advocacy, capacity building and an improved regulatory environment should remain at the core of LWC activities. Additionally, given sustainability issues at the community level, the LWC has an opportunity to return to “WASH basics”, while creating space for innovation and issue-specific donor objectives (such as nutrition-sensitive WASH).

**Re-engage in aggressive communications and outreach activities.** In addition to a public ‘re-launch’ event, the Consortium needs to develop and implement an aggressive communication and outreach campaign. This requires filling the empty Advocacy/Communications Manager position at the CCT, and a coordinated effort of Consortium partners to frequently contribute relevant and interesting content for monthly e-newsletters and bulletins, quarterly learning events, properly-branded radio-spots and talk shows, and mass SMS messaging in partnership with Liberian telecom operators (who likely will provide drastically reduced SMS costs given LWC's social mission and based upon ET experience in other countries).

## 5.2 IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

A key component of re-energizing the LWC is improved consortium governance. The LWC Board can accomplish this in four ways:

**Rotating CCT Host Agency.** The administrative burden of maintaining and managing the CCT is significant. Given competing programming priorities, lead agencies have the potential to tire of CCT management responsibilities. Although the ET does not have direct evidence that this is the case with the current lead agency, one plausible idea to ensure energetic leadership, while improving Consortium member representation, is to establish a rotating CCT. For example, while CCT staff members may remain the same, the host agency revolves every two- or – three years. This will allow for a steady infusion of new ideas, energy, and operating environments that potentially can increase the independence of the CCT and distribute CCT management burdens among Consortium members. Given that CCT human resource decisions (e.g., hiring and termination) should reside with the LWC Board per Consortium governance documents, rotating host agencies should not impact the longevity of CCT staff. One immediate action is for the LWC Board to establish the terms of a rotating host agency including length of term, new host agency selection, implications for grant applications and contract signing, etc. Another option would be to register the CCT as an independent agency. This would ensure its independence and strengthen LWC Board governance over the CCT (as opposed to a single agency being responsible for the CCT).

**Roles and Responsibilities of the LWC Board.** The LWC needs to revisit its founding documents to remind members of the roles and responsibilities of the LWC Board vis-à-vis the CCT. Although not uncommon, a coordination unit can take on responsibility greater than its mandate, and often unintentionally. When conducting outreach and coordination activities, a coordination unit can be seen by stakeholders and even consortium partners as the “leadership” of a consortium. This is likely the case with the LWC. To ensure effective and efficient governance, the LWC Board needs to reassert itself as the key decision maker and strategic leader of the Consortium. This includes adherence to pre-established criteria for the hiring and termination of CCT personnel, outreach and donor representation activities, and strategic direction.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the CCT.** Similarly, the roles and responsibilities of the CCT also need to be clearly understood by CCT staff and Consortium Members. Based upon coordination units of other WASH Consortiums (DRC, Sierra Leone), the CCT should not directly implement program activities, but should instead focus on coordination activities, convening of internal and external meetings, implementation of LWC Board decisions, and Board-approved donor representation activities. This will not only ensure the preeminence of the LWC Board, but also help clarify and focus job responsibilities for CCT staff members (something that will likely be welcomed by CCT staff members).

**Full Staffing of CCT Positions.** Finally, improved governance of the LWC is contingent upon the full staffing of the four CCT positions. The CCT Consortium Coordinator position is a difficult job that requires the full energy and focus of a high-capacity individual. This position cannot be split with non-LWC responsibilities, as the priorities of the host agency will most likely outweigh attention to the LWC no matter the dedication, hard work and intention of the individual. Next, the M&E/Technical Adviser position is currently over-burdened with responsibilities that should be undertaken by other positions currently unfilled or filled only half time. Monitoring impact, especially in WASH, is a difficult undertaking by itself. The endeavor is even more difficult across five or six international NGOs implementing in different geographical locations. However, without evidence of impact, donor engagement and fundraising can be substantially constrained. Lastly, the Advocacy/Communications Manager is a critical post. Effective communications and outreach is critical for the Consortium to maintain and improve its reputation and

standing, to demonstrate its continued relevance to donors and the Government of Liberia, and to raise awareness of the Consortium’s work to attract diversified and increased long-term funding.

### 5.3 IMPROVED SUSTAINABILITY OF LWC ACTIVITIES

Technical knowledge retention and sustainable capacity development of WASH management committees, pump technicians, community members (good hygiene behaviors), and public sector WASH officials requires training and sensitization timelines of at least 18 months, with recent evidence from the DRC WASH Consortium that 24 months of intensive training is required to achieve lasting impact at the community level. The annual funding cycle of the LWC has inadvertently placed an emphasis on hardware (physical infrastructure) over software (skills development and capacity building). LWC work plans and activity planning need to have longer time horizons than 12 months to achieve sustainability. While this has begun with the preparation of the most recent proposal of five years to Irish Aid, the LWC need to realistic assess implementation timelines, capacity development efforts, and community “graduation” criteria (adoption of good WASH behaviors) to determine appropriate timelines independent of donor agreements and funding cycles.

Next, although the LWC has created various training guidelines and materials, the low capacity of WASH Management Committees observed by the ET suggest that a comprehensive WMC training manual is needed. The DRC WASH Consortium developed a twelve-module training manual covering issues such as governance and representation, operations and maintenance, financial sustainability, WMC-led behavior change communications and more. Such a curriculum will help ensure that WMC training is not only comprehensive, but also consistent among Consortium members and implementing partners.



### 5.4 MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM FUNDING STRATEGIES

The LWC must diversify its funding base beyond single-donor, single-year agreements. While Irish Aid has been the lifeline of the Consortium for the past two years, LWC must secure multi-year funding, or at

least establish a multi-year strategy and activity plan that donors can opt into. Below are some suggestions on how the LWC might accomplish this.

First, LWC partners need to identify certain areas that may require partner investment, even if the activity or initiative is not of interest to a particular donor. For example, one stakeholder mentioned that the Consortium is not conducting learning events or public dialogue sessions as frequently as before due to a lack of funding.<sup>71</sup> However, fewer public events diminishes the profile and prominence of the Consortium, which may hinder fundraising efforts. This statement is indicative of a 'vicious' cycle where less funding leads to fewer activities, and fewer activities reduce the attractiveness of an organization to current and other donors. Investing in branding and communication and outreach activities, even if not fully funded by current donor agreements will increase the prominence of the Consortium and raise donor awareness of the Consortium's value proposition and its attractiveness as an implementing partner for donors interested in investing in the sector.

Additionally, led by the CCT, the Consortium should conduct targeted donor outreach to highlight its activities, promote its value proposition, and leverage coordination among implementers and donors to attract the attention of donors. For example, LWC representatives should meet one-on-one with every active donor in Liberia at least once per quarter to share success stories, lessons learned, and to highlight new approaches and initiatives that may require additional funding. One proven strategy is to demonstrate how new donor investments can take current successful initiatives to scale, or can catalyze new initiatives that may already have co-investment from other donors, the Government of Liberia, or even the private sector.

Lastly, the Consortium should consider establishing a multi-donor platform, such as a trust, whereby donors can contribute varying amounts of funding without having to negotiate individual donor agreements with the Consortium. This idea builds upon one of the early attributes of the Consortium, where a donor can fund the activities of several organizations through a single agreement with the Consortium. Likewise, by establishing a multi-donor trust, donors can enter and exit funding arrangements with the Consortium with greater agility and speed. The DRC WASH Consortium is currently considering such a mechanism. Additionally, such a trust has the potential to attract Development Finance Institution (DFI) money, such as resources from the World Bank, KfW, African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction, AFD and others. Blended finance mechanisms for development are gaining momentum and may provide the financial capital to establish revolving technical assistance facilities or investments in larger scale projects, perhaps in partnership with the Government of Liberia.

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<sup>71</sup> Comment made by a Consortium partner staff member at the March 11, 2019 Meta-evaluation Validation Workshop.

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## **7. LIST OF ANNEXES**

Annex A: Terms of Reference

Annex B: List of Stakeholder Interviews and Site Visits