



2021 Sustainable Services Checklist Summary

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The Sustainable Services Checklist (SSC) is a monitoring tool Water For People uses to assess the sustainability of WASH services in a district and is critical for determining when Water For People can move to the Transition to Exit phase in the Road to Everyone Forever. Developed in 2017, the Sustainable Services Checklist is used to evaluate the entire enabling environment of a district for long-term service provision.

The SSC for water has eight core water indicators that are consistent across country programs, and fall under three main categories:

- **Service authority:** The capacity of the service authority, or the entity responsible for regulating water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services in a district, to manage, finance, and monitor water services in a district.
- **Service provider:** The capacity of the service provider, or the entity responsible for day-to-day provision and management of water services, to finance, operate, and manage water services.
- **Water resources management:** The capacity of the responsible authorities to ensure the quality and quantity of water sources in a district.

In 2020, Water For People developed an SSC for sanitation with three main indicators:

- **Service authority structure and management:** The capacity of the service authority to plan and regulate sanitation services, and to support an enabling environment for the sanitation private sector.
- **Service authority finance:** The capacity of the service authority to budget for and finance sanitation infrastructure and to cover direct support costs for sanitation activities.
- **Service authority monitoring:** The capacity of the service authority to monitor sanitation services within the district.

The sanitation SSC is not a part of the water SSC, even though it is completed at the same time, and instead feeds into Forever Milestones for sanitation.

Metrics that relate to the core indicators are contextualized to each country in which we work, and every year scores are updated.

The SSC is completed with data from two different sources:

- Annual monitoring data is used to complete service provider scores.
- Annual interviews with district partners are used to inform service authority and water resources management scores.

In 2021, similar to 2020, due to COVID-19, country staff worked with Everyone Forever district partners in their own countries to self-assess the sustainability of WASH services, rather than staff from another country program traveling and completing the SSC. Given this, while some districts in Bolivia scored all yellows and greens in the water SSC, they have not yet met the



Forever milestone for water, as external validation of the milestones is required. In fiscal year 2022, the SSC will be conducted by an external consultant in these districts in Bolivia.

This year, the SSC includes six additional districts. Some of this is because we are working in more districts (Karongi, Rwanda; Khoirasol, Rajnagar, and Chikaldara, India), and some is because we separated districts in India that had previously been combined (for example, in the past, Sagar and Patharpratima blocks were assessed as one, as South 24 Parganas, and this year, we assessed them separately).

The figures below show the 2021 Water SSC and the trends for water SSC scores between 2020 and 2021. Other than in Rwanda and Nicaragua, 2020 service provider data was not collected due to the pandemic, so trends for service provider data show progress from 2019 to 2021.

Figure 1: Water For People 2021 SSC for water



Figure 2: Water For People SSC trends from 2020 to 2021 for water



The most improvements overall, with nine districts shifting positively in their status, were seen for **service provider finance**. In Bolivia, four districts improved service provider finance scores, moving from basic levels of sustainability to intermediate. This is an important step, as it is one of the hardest sustainability indicators, and moves the service provider finance indicator to a sustainable level in those districts. Both districts in Uganda and two districts in Peru (Cascas and Reque) improved their service provider finance scores, however they are still at a basic level of sustainability. Despite these improvements, 29 of 35 districts are inadequate or basic in service provider finance, making it the most challenging indicator for country programs. Within this indicator, covering a portion of major repair and replacement is the worst performing metric for all countries except Peru. Charging a tariff based on water consumed and covering operation and maintenance costs are also large challenges within this indicator, with less common issues being the remittance of funds to bank accounts, and water users not paying their water payments on time.

Finance also continues to be a challenge for service authorities in most districts, with only 29% of districts ranking intermediate or high. This is a decrease from last year, when 34% of districts were considered sustainable for service authority finance. **Service authority finance** scores are low because allocations from the ministries of health and education to support WASH services at public institutions are minimal, districts are not calculating and allocating enough



funding to cover capital maintenance expenditures (CapManEx), and because districts are not estimating and budgeting for operating costs of the office.

Since both service authorities and service providers are struggling to allocate sufficient funds to cover future CapManEx costs, most districts will not have sufficient funds to cover major repair and replacement costs. This means that tariffs need to increase, districts need to increase their allocations for CapManEx, and/or districts need to look for additional funding sources (beyond non-governmental organizations). This is one of the reasons why Water For People's work at the national level, promoting increased budgets for WASH services, is so critical.

Monitoring continues to be a challenge, with 24 out of 35 districts receiving inadequate or basic scores. The monitoring indicator assesses the ability of districts to implement and fund monitoring, to make decisions based on monitoring data, and additionally in Malawi, Rwanda, and India, whether a customer feedback platform is successfully implemented. In Latin America, challenges were generally evenly split between managing the process and making decisions based on monitoring data. In Malawi (Chikhwawa and Chiradzulu) and India, collecting customer feedback is the largest challenge. In Rwanda, a national Monitoring Information System was developed, but in 2021, Water For People was still supporting the implementation of the system, leading to lower scores. Globally, one reason for lower scores on monitoring could be attributed to the absence of national monitoring frameworks and reliance on Water For People's monitoring program, which is likely beyond what is feasible for districts to independently manage in the future. Therefore, it is important to work at the national level to promote improved monitoring systems, as we have done in Rwanda.

Service provider operation and maintenance scores fell in Honduras (El Negrito and San Antonio de Cortés), Nicaragua, Uganda (Kamwenge), Bolivia (Pocona), and Peru (Asunción), accounting for the most decreases of any indicator in 2021. The two issues for service provider operation and maintenance were the availability of spare parts and a trained professional in repairing water points and water systems, but the most challenging metric was not consistent across districts in the same country program or across country programs.

Service provider structure continues to be the highest performing indicator, with 22 districts scoring high and six districts scoring intermediate sustainability due to the existence of service providers and those providers being legally registered. Similarly, **service authority structures** are also high (25 districts scoring high sustainability), thanks to the presence of functioning district WASH offices. Improvements in the structure indicators for both service providers and service authorities in India are due to changing metrics to reflect the ideal state more accurately, rather than significant changes in structure of service providers and authorities. **Service authority management** scores remain high, with a few improvements (in Luuka, Uganda and San Bartolomé Jocotenango, Guatemala due to the completion of an asset analysis, and in Reque, Peru due to the completion of the district water plan). High service authority management scores suggest that the established structures will be well managed, leading to greater sustainability.

Sustainability levels for **water resources management** (WRM) are inconsistent across country programs. Scores increased in Bolivia (Arani, Pocona, San Benito, and Villa Rivero) due both to improved water quality testing and modifying the metric related to management bodies for WRM to more accurately reflect the ideal state. In Rulindo, Rwanda, WRM scores improved because the district is now enforcing water abstraction regulations and issuing abstraction permits. In

San Bartolomé Jocotenango in Guatemala, the WRM score decreased because source capacity and water quality testing were not completed at as many water sources as had historically been completed. For some districts (Chinda, Honduras; Reque, Peru; Karongi, Rwanda; Sheohar, India), all WRM metrics pose challenges. The other districts that have the lowest scores for WRM are primarily challenged by the absence of a WRM plan and inventory of water sources, in addition to water quality testing and testing of water source capacity.

Figure 3: Water For People 2021 SSC for sanitation



As previously mentioned, in fiscal year 2020, Water For People piloted the Sustainable Services Checklist for sanitation. Since it was piloted last year, trends were not assessed, and will be tracked starting in FY2022. Interestingly, two of the most challenging indicators for water, finance and monitoring, are the two higher performing indicators for sanitation. This could be because households typically carry a greater burden of the cost of sanitation facilities, therefore, it is not required that district budgets for sanitation in a district. Other reasons for the higher scores could be that not as much financing is required for sanitation services, or that at this point, we do not have a good idea of the cost required to improve sanitation services. In FY2022, several different country programs are developing sanitation costing tools, which will likely help to further define this indicator. Similar to fiscal year 2020, the largest challenges were regulating occupational, environmental, and health risks and promotion of the private sector.



At the request of the India country program, in FY2021, service provider questions were piloted for sanitation. These questions follow the entire value chain for sanitation, from containment to treatment. In FY2022, we hope to further refine these indicators and implement similar indicators in additional country programs.

The SSC indicates that many of the challenges are larger than a district can tackle alone, and national support is necessary for ensuring the sustainability of WASH services. To build this support, we should increase our work at the national level to promote national monitoring systems, national priorities for WRM, and increased national financing for WASH services.

While there continue to be challenges to sustainability in most districts where Water For People works, there have also been improvements, even in the face of continuing challenges related to COVID-19, which in some cases had a direct impact on district budget allocations for WASH services. While still riddled with challenges, it is encouraging to see improvements in service provider finance scores, and lessons learned from districts that have achieved sustainability in this metric should be applied in additional districts. Over the years we have seen significant achievements in improving the sustainability of WASH services, and by applying lessons learned, both from our successes and our failures, and by prioritizing national influence Everyone Forever districts will be closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”