
Access to essential services: key figures and progress on the African continent

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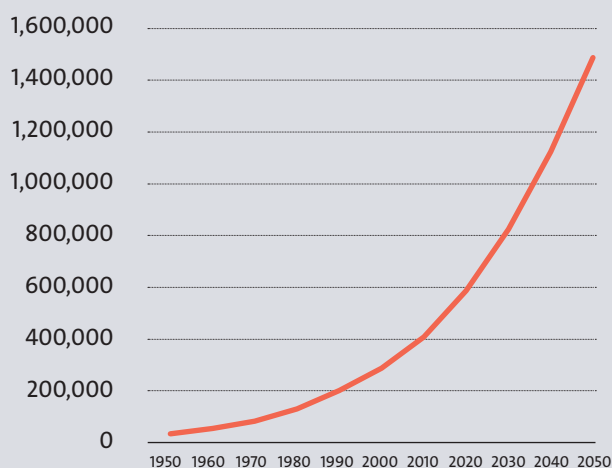
Mathilde Martin-Moreau, David Ménascé, Archipel&Co - Issue coordinators



In recent years, many areas of Africa have seen progress in closing the gap in terms of access to essential services in water, sanitation, energy and waste management. But provision remains sadly insufficient to provide for most of people's needs against a background of unparalleled population growth.

The Sustainable Development Goals set out ambitious new targets for each of these extremely interdependent services.

Urban population (in thousands) on the African continent, 1950 to 2050



Source: United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, the 2018 Revision

- Goal 6 addresses access to both clean water and sanitation. Goal 6.1 covers universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, and Goal 6.2 includes achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all with, in particular, an end to open defecation.
- Goal 7 asks signatories to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services, with an increase of renewable energy in the global energy mix.
- Lastly, the question of waste is addressed in Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) in terms of management and in Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) in terms of cutting overall volumes.

1.5 BILLION CITY-DWELLERS ON THE CONTINENT BY 2050

Africa has more young people than any other continent, and is experiencing the most rapid population growth of any region of the world. The continent's population is set to double by 2050. This phenomenon impacts its cities in particular, as this is where most population growth is centered. By 2050, almost 1.5 billion Africans – over half of all its people – will live in cities, compared with fewer than 500 million in 2015.¹ This fast-growing urban population poses massive challenges in terms of urban infrastructure and access to essential services.

ACCESS TO WATER IN AFRICA HAS IMPROVED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

Access to clean water, designated a fundamental right by the United Nations in July 2010, has for many years been a key component of national and international policy agendas. In Africa, the portion of people with access to at least a basic service – purpose-built water supply points such as protected wells, boreholes or standpipes – rose from around 50% in 2000 to over 60% in 2017. Despite this progress, there remains an enormous amount of work to accomplish. Worldwide, one in two people without access to basic water services currently live in Africa.² But there

¹ United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision

² AFD, Atlas de l'Afrique, 2020

are, of course, disparities between the continent's various regions. In total, 37% of the African population has access to sufficient clean water in the home.³ This rises to 88% of the population in North Africa, 44% in southern Africa, 22% in East Africa, and just 16% in central Africa.⁴

SLOWER PROGRESS IN SANITATION

Sanitation services have long been the poor relation of policies for accessing essential services. The 2000 Millennium Development Goals made little mention of sanitation as a discrete topic. Today, less than 20% of

Africans have access to safely managed sanitation systems and the proportion of people with access to basic toilet installations rose only from 28% to 33% in the years 2000-2017. But again there are substantial regional disparities. In 2017, close to 68% of the population in North Africa had access to sanitation systems, compared to 25% in southern Africa, 2.1% in East Africa, and just 1.7% in central Africa.⁵

There are also considerable disparities between urban and rural areas: most people in rural areas practice open defecation in the absence of any suitable alternatives.

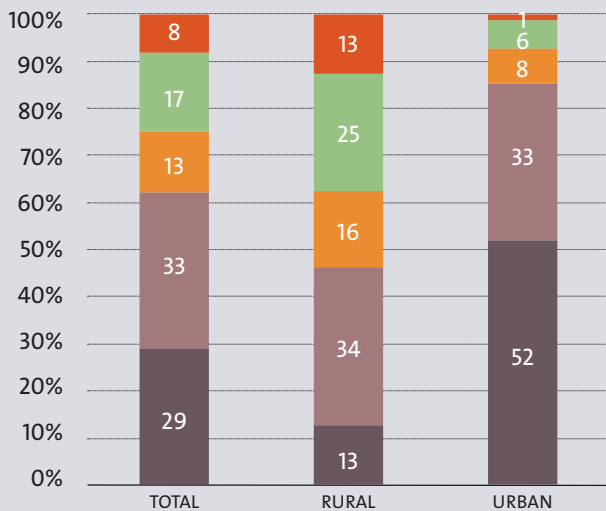
³ UNICEF and World Health Organisation, 2019

⁴ UNICEF and World Health Organisation, 2019

⁵ UNICEF and World Health Organisation, 2019

Access to drinking water in Africa (2017)

- Safely managed service
- Basic service
- Limited service
- Unimproved
- Surface water



DRINKING WATER LADDER

Safely Managed: Drinking water from an improved water source which is located on premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination

Basic: Drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing

Limited: Drinking water from an improved source for which collection time exceeds 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing

Unimproved: Drinking water from an unprotected dug well or unprotected spring

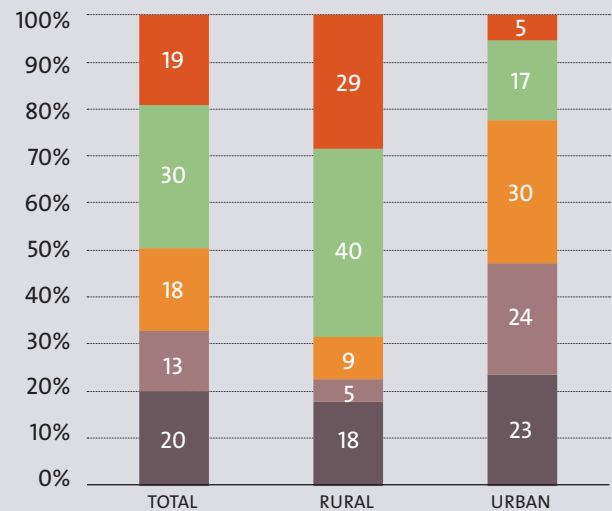
Surface Water: Drinking water directly from a river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal or irrigation canal

Source: <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/JMP-2017-wash-in-the-2030-agenda-fr.pdf>

Source : WHO/UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation

Access to sanitation in Africa (2017)

- Safely managed service
- Basic service
- Limited service
- Unimproved
- Open defecation



SANITATION LADDER

Safely Managed: Use of improved facilities which are not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed in situ or transported and treated off-site

Basic: Use of improved facilities which are not shared with other households

Limited: Use of improved facilities shared between two or more households

Unimproved: Use of pit latrines without a slab or platform, hanging latrines or bucket latrines

Open Defecation: Disposal of human faeces in fields, forests, bushes, open bodies of water, beaches and other open spaces or with solid waste

Source: WHO/UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation

MAJOR PROGRESS IN ACCESS TO ENERGY, POWERED BY OFF-GRID INNOVATIONS

In recent years there has been considerable progress in Africa in terms of access to electricity. The portion of Africans with access leapt from 29% to 50% in a little under 30 years.⁶ Even so, roughly one person in two is without access to electricity⁷ and there are major disparities between regions as well as between urban and rural areas: in the latter, only a third of people have access to electricity compared to over 80% in towns and cities. The

rapid development of off-grid systems makes it possible for growing numbers of people to access alternative sources of energy. It is estimated that by 2040 less than a third of people in rural areas with access to electricity will have a connection to a national utility network.⁸

WASTE MANAGEMENT: PROGRESS NEEDED IN THE COMING YEARS

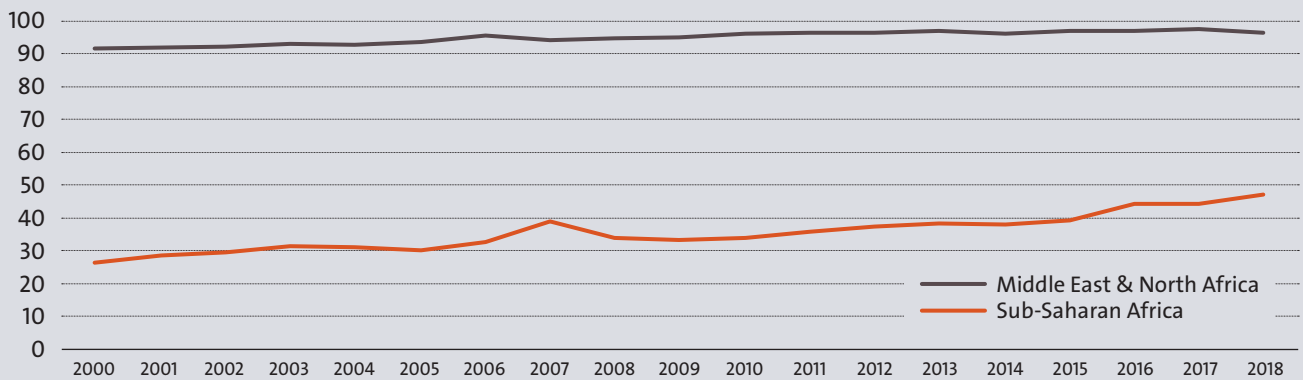
Waste collection and management systems across Africa remain highly deficient. In many countries, waste collection is primarily carried out by the informal sector, working

6 AFD, Atlas de l'Afrique, 2020

7 World Bank, 2019

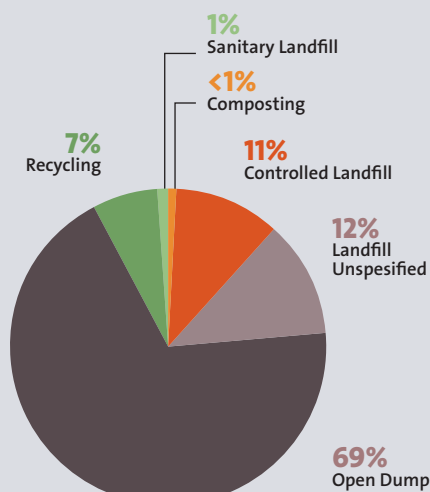
8 Africa Progress Panel, 2016

Access to electricity (% of population) in Middle East & North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa



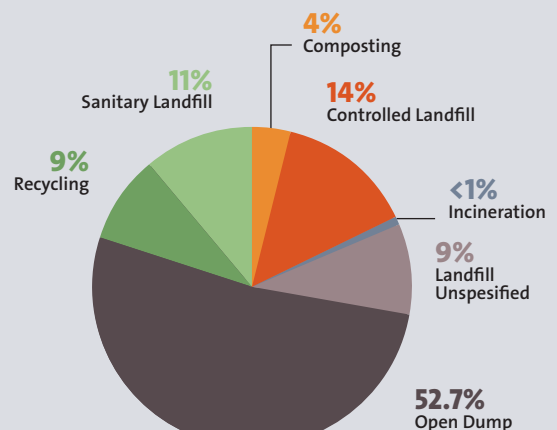
Source: World Bank, Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) database

Waste Disposal and Treatment in Sub-Saharan Africa (%)



Source: World Bank, 2018

Waste Disposal and Treatment in the Middle East and North Africa (%)



Source: World Bank, 2018

outside any formalized public service provision. The importance of the task is highlighted by the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing the world's fastest-growing increase in volumes of waste generated, and these volumes are slated to triple by 2050.⁹ Across the region, the overall waste collection rate is 43% in urban areas and just 9% in rural areas. And close to 70% of waste is dumped in open dumps. Collection rates are significantly higher in North Africa, with overall collection rates of 90% in urban areas and 74% in rural areas.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS GROWING STRONGLY ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Innovation ecosystems have been growing exponentially across Africa in recent years: startups, fablabs, more or

less high-tech manufacturers, and so on. The most recent estimates identified over 600 technology hubs¹⁰ (physical spaces providing support to tech startups) in Africa in 2018, mostly concentrated in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya, as well as Morocco and Egypt in North Africa. There has also been an impressive rise in the amount of funding raised by African startups, with a 74% year-on-year increase in equity funding raised in 2018, according to the latest data from Partech Africa. And this is all in addition to myriad local structures that support community-based initiatives.

There has also been a noticeable rise in the number of alliances created to bring innovators together, either via national hubs, like Nigeria's Innovation Support Network, or as part of alliances between several regions and countries, like Afrilabs, whose current 150-plus members are drawn from 45 countries.

9 World Bank, 2018

10 GSMA, Briter Bridges, 2019

