



Joint Press Release

President Kiir signs South Sudan's Compact on Water and Sanitation

03 June 2024, Juba, South Sudan

The President of South Sudan, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, signed the country's Heads of State Initiative Compact on Water and Sanitation today - a major milestone to ensure the rights of all citizens to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

The signing of the Compact on Water and Sanitation marks a significant step forward in improving the water and sanitation situation in South Sudan which faces many climate-related, social and economic challenges. The WASH Compact stems from the global UN Water Conference in March 2023, held in New York. It is built upon clear commitments that encompass increased budget allocations, innovative sources of financing, and comprehensive plans for the construction of vital water and sanitation infrastructure.

"Safe water and a clean-living environment are critical for a country to grow and prosper. Therefore, the Government must provide an enabling environment for the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector to develop, manage and review policies, strategies, and guidelines, including passing the Water Bill into an Act," said President Kiir. The signing ceremony was organized in the Office of the President and was attended by the ambassadors of Japan, Germany, Netherlands and country representatives of African Development Bank and World Bank.

South Sudan faces enormous water, sanitation, and hygiene challenges, which cause poor health, including malnutrition, school absenteeism, loss of household income, and reduced workforce productivity.

In South Sudan, access to basic water supply has fallen from 41% in 2010 to 39% in 2020. During the same period, access to adequate sanitation rose from 7% to 14%, while open defecation fell slightly from 71% to 63%. For the first time, there is data on hand washing; only 22% of the population have handwashing facilities with soap and water in their homes.

In February this year, South Sudan hosted the WASH Joint Sector Review Conference in Juba, a significant gathering attended by over 400 local and international experts on water, sanitation and hygiene. This review culminated in a joint declaration that outlined the contents of the Compact.

South Sudan's Heads of State Initiative Compact on Water and Sanitation was launched on Monday by the second vice-president, H.E. Dr. James Wani Igga at a ceremony that gathered stakeholders from the water and sanitation sector, including Government Ministries, donors, and UN agencies, to address water and sanitation challenges. The President recognised the continued support of the United Nations and development partners in working side-by-side with the Government to advance the WASH agenda. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a key donor that is driving compacts on water, sanitation and hygiene globally and generously supports many projects in South Sudan.

"As South Sudan commits to this great initiative, the Kingdom of Netherlands would like to assure you of its commitment by continuing our long term support to the water sector of South Sudan which started in the 1970's. It continues today through our partnership with UNICEF – delivering safe drinking water and sanitation services in Jonglei, Lakes, Western Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria States" said Marjan Schippers, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to South Sudan.

The Compact on Water and Sanitation, a crucial component of the 'Heads of State Initiatives' project, is a groundbreaking effort to advance water, sanitation and hygiene services in South Sudan. South Sudan is the first country on the continent and the second in the world to sign the Compact by a Head of State.

“The signing of this Compact is a significant moment for South Sudan. To achieve its ambition, it will be crucial that the Compact is nurtured through partnership and nourished through the highest levels of investment for water, sanitation and hygiene,” said Catarina de Albuquerque, Chief Executive Officer of the Sanitation and Water for All partnership.

“The water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in South Sudan greatly impact health, nutrition, education, protection and livelihoods of women and children. It is of great concern to UNICEF, and we are delighted to see this pledge by the Government to address these challenges over the next six years,” said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in South Sudan.

A key goal of the Compact is to ensure that by 2030, South Sudan is Open Defecation Free, the government will lead implementation programs supported by partners to improve access to critical services to achieve this ambitious goal.

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