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May 25, 2023

To: The Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation of the UN General Assembly

Subject: Report on Water and Sanitation in Liberia

Dear Special Rapporteur,

I am pleased to present this report on the state of water and sanitation in Liberia. The report is submitted in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations General Assembly to monitor and promote the realization of the human right to water and sanitation.

Liberia is a West African country with a population of approximately 5 million people. The country has made progress in recent years in improving access to water and sanitation services by only supplying pipe-born running water to the City of Monrovia and its environs from the Mount Coffey Water Treatment facility in the country, while the rest of the entire country is left unattended to. NGOs and other local organizations, including faith-based organizations have intervened in this sector by constructing wells-borehole and toilets in rural communities to address some of these needs, but the challenges still remain.

**Access to Water:**

In Liberia, access to safe drinking water remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural areas. According to the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), only 61% of the population has access to safe drinking water, while the remaining 39% rely on unsafe sources, including rivers, streams, and unprotected wells. On the flip side of that, according to the International Social Survey Program’s (ISSP) report two years ago, less than 10% of the Liberian population has access to safe drinking water, while the Human Rights Monitor of the United Methodist Church in Liberia in a survey conducted in three Counties in 2020 reveals that limited access to safe water especially in rural areas has contributed to the infant mortality rate during that period. This lack of access to safe water has also contributed to the prevalence of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid fever. The basic fundamental human rights to access clean and safe water in Liberia is limited and serious action needs to be taken by the Liberian government and the international community to address this problem.

**Sanitation:**

Access to adequate sanitation facilities is also a significant challenge in Liberia, particularly in rural areas. According to LISGIS, only 22% of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities, while the majority of the population relies on shared or unimproved facilities. This lack of access to adequate sanitation facilities has contributed to the prevalence of waterborne diseases and poor hygiene practices, including deaths.

**Water and Sanitation as a tool for peace, prevention and cooperation:**

The right to water and sanitation is enshrined in international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The United Nations recognizes that access to clean water and sanitation is essential for achieving sustainable development and for ensuring peace and security.

Water and sanitation can be powerful tools for peace, prevention, and cooperation. Access to clean water and sanitation can help reduce conflict and promote cooperation between communities and nations. When people have access to safe water and sanitation, they are better able to meet their basic needs and live with dignity. This can reduce tensions and conflicts that may arise over scarce resources.

In addition, water and sanitation can play a critical role in preventing conflict and promoting peace. Many conflicts arise over access to resources, including water. By ensuring that all people have access to safe water and sanitation, we can help prevent conflicts from erupting in the first place. Moreover, water and sanitation infrastructure can be built or restored as part of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts.

Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation can also promote cooperation between communities and nations. Water resources often cross borders, and disputes over shared water resources can lead to conflict. By working together to manage and protect water resources, countries can build trust and promote cooperation. This can lead to greater stability and peace in the region.

**Challenges:**

The challenges to improving water and sanitation in Liberia are complex and multifaceted. Some of the key challenges include:

- Limited infrastructure: The lack of adequate infrastructure, including water treatment plants and sanitation facilities, is a significant barrier to improving access to safe water and sanitation in Liberia.

- Inadequate funding: The government of Liberia has limited financial resources to invest in water and sanitation infrastructure.

- Poor governance: Corruption and weak governance have hindered progress in improving water and sanitation in Liberia.

- Climate change: Liberia, like other countries in West Africa, is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, including droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events, which can impact water availability and quality.

**Recommendations:**

To address these challenges and improve access to water and sanitation in Liberia, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Increase investment in water and sanitation infrastructure: The government of Liberia should increase investment in water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.

- Improve governance: The government of Liberia should take steps to address corruption and improve governance in the water and sanitation sector.

- Strengthen partnerships: The government of Liberia should strengthen partnerships with international organizations and civil society organizations to support the development of water and sanitation infrastructure.

- Promote hygiene education: The government of Liberia should promote hygiene education and awareness campaigns to improve hygiene practices and reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases.

**Institution Background**

The Monitor” as it is affectionately called was created in response to the endemic Liberian crisis to express the up-right position of the Church on issues of human rights, rule of law, good governance, and social justice. Conceived in 1993, it was officially given birth at the 162nd Annual Session of the Liberia Annual Conference held in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County in February 1995. The Monitor was officially launched on January 15, 1997.

In 2009, as part of its intervention strategy to address the rights to water and sanitation, the Human Rights Monitor initiated the Water for Life program, which aims to construct water wells and sanitation facilities in poor communities in an effort to address this huge problem. Since the inception of this program, over 500 wells and over 20 toilets have been constructed across Liberia and the Republic of Guinea affecting over 100,000 people within those two countries. This intervention has restored the dignity of those populations massively thus improving their health and wellbeing. Another significant impact of our program is that it has addressed the challenges that especially women and girls face by trekking long distances to collect water from streams and rivers for household use. The need for continual support to this initiative is paramount in addressing this fundamental problem. The vision of this program is to advocate and work to ensure that every village in Liberia has access to a water well/port and proper sanitation facility.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, while Liberia has made progress in improving access to water and sanitation in recent years, significant challenges remain. The government of Liberia, in partnership with international organizations and civil society organizations, should take steps to address these challenges and promote the realization of the human right to water and sanitation for all Liberians. The right to water and sanitation is essential for ensuring peace, preventing conflict, and promoting cooperation at both the national and international levels. By recognizing this right and working to ensure that all people have access to clean water and sanitation, we can help build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

Sincerely,

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