

SANITATION AND WATER FOR ALL: A Global Framework for Action

*Putting in Place the Tools to Achieve Universal and Sustainable Access to
Sanitation and Drinking Water*

Draft Concept Note, 1 March 2010

SANITATION AND WATER FOR ALL: A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

Sanitation and Water for All is a global partnership between developing countries, donors, multi-lateral agencies, civil society and other development partners working together to achieve universal and sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water. Sanitation and Water for All is a framework, not a new organization, which addresses gaps in policy and planning, financing, information, and technical assistance that are impeding global progress.

Recognising that countries and organisations around the world can achieve more by working together, Sanitation and Water for All is a framework for cooperation based on mutual trust and support. The partnership is founded on a commitment to principles of aid effectiveness, and aims to improve the targeting of existing funding sources to better achieve sustainable results.

Sanitation and Water for All was established to address widely recognised obstacles to improving access to sanitation and drinking water: low political prioritisation, inadequate policy and planning frameworks at country level, poorly targeted and insufficient financing, a lack of reliable and comprehensive data, and low levels of mutual accountability.

Sanitation and Water for All is

- An innovative partnership based on mutual trust and support
- A framework for action that is transparent, accountable and results-oriented
- A shared commitment to applying principles of aid effectiveness, including country ownership of plans, supported by development partners
- An explicit vision, an attainable ambition

Sanitation and Water for All is not

- A new organization or institution
- A totally novel approach to development assistance
- A major new funding mechanism to fund implementation

THE CHALLENGE

Sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water underpins all aspects of human and economic development. Investing in sanitation and drinking water improves health and reduces health care costs, improves productivity and increases the return on investments in education. It is estimated that meeting the sanitation and drinking water targets of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 would have an annual economic benefit of \$38 billion to developing countries. If universal coverage for sanitation and drinking water is achieved, the economic benefits would rise to \$171 billion annually¹.

¹ Hutton, G., Haller, L. and J. Bartram. *Economic and health effects of increasing coverage of low cost household drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to countries off-track to meet MDG target 10*. World Health Organization, 2007.

And yet 2.5 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, including 1.2 billion open defecators, and almost 900 million people lack access to basic water supply. Most of these people are in the 58 countries which are off-track to achieve the MDG target on sanitation and the 23 countries off-track to achieve the MDG drinking water target. Many of these same countries are also off-track to achieve several other key poverty reduction goals and are the focus of the Sanitation and Water for All: A Global Framework for Action. Improvements in access to sanitation and drinking water will also make significant contributions to achieving the Millennium Development Goals on health, education, food security, gender equality, and poverty alleviation.

Rising to this challenge means finding a new way of working that uses money more effectively, promotes shared knowledge and coordinated action, and delivers on promises. A global effort is needed that is driven by national governments and supported by development partners in a coordinated, harmonised manner. There is no single apex organisation or network for sanitation and drinking water that can champion this cause and coordinate this work. Sanitation and Water for All, as a global partnership, fills that role.

KEY GAPS REMAIN MAJOR OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

Despite public pledges and commitments by politicians and numerous international conferences and compacts, progress remains slow. Those responsible for solving the problem agree that the following key gaps in the sector are hindering progress.

- Low political prioritisation, leading to insufficient resource allocation
- Lack of cohesive national planning frameworks for addressing sanitation and drinking water
- Poor targeting and unpredictability of financing, resulting in resources failing to reach those most in need.
- Lack of evidence, data and analysis to inform decision-makers
- Lack of mutual accountability and sector-specific monitoring mechanisms

PRINCIPLES

Sanitation and Water for All is based on a set of core principles, grounded in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, international agreements about aid effectiveness. Sanitation and Water for All partners endorse these principles and commit to prioritise them within efforts to improve access to sanitation and drinking water.

- **Prioritisation of the most off-track countries:** The priority for the next five years is to help the people who live in the countries that are most off-track in achieving their sanitation and water MDG targets – an important step on the way to universal access. It is important to get access to people who have never been served, rather than increasing the level of service for those who already have access to sanitation and drinking water.
- **Mutual Accountability:** Donors, developing countries and other partners have the responsibility to hold each other mutually accountable for obligations made both broadly (in the Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda for Action and the MDGs) and specifically (in the policy, budget and implementation commitments each makes) in an effort to provide those unserved with sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water.

- **Nationally-driven sector development:** Country ownership and national government leadership are at the forefront of sustainable sector development. Donors and development partners will work in support of strong national government leadership and engage in country coordination, planning and implementation processes.
- **Cooperation and Transparency:** Countries and organisations around the world can achieve more by working together openly and collaboratively, sharing lessons and admitting mistakes, helping and encouraging each other, than they can by working independently.
- **Support for Existing Initiatives:** Existing national and regional processes should be supported and, where appropriate, coordinated globally. Global efforts should not duplicate existing productive efforts.
- **Political Prioritisation:** Political will, essential to progress, is demonstrated by prioritising sanitation and drinking water within national development agendas and international development assistance frameworks and in terms of providing adequate financing and capacity.

AIMS

Sanitation and Water for All aims to address the fundamental obstacles currently facing the sector, and achieve the following:

- **Increase Political Prioritisation** for sustainable sanitation and drinking water. This is achieved by providing a global forum for discussing the barriers to progress, learning lessons, agreeing tangible actions and monitoring progress and impacts. .
- **Support Strong National Sanitation and Drinking Water Planning, Investment and Accountability Frameworks** to promote sustainable access to services. This includes agreeing what support countries need to access existing sources of funding, making available coordinated technical assistance and monitoring progress against key benchmarks.
- **Improve Targeting And Impact Of Resources** for sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water, and ensure resources are used effectively, with a focus on countries that are most off-track to meeting the MDGs on sanitation and drinking water. This will include increased national and donor budgets as well as better harmonized and aligned aid from donors.
- **Support Effective Decision Making** by providing detailed information and evidence on what works for scaling up sustainable delivery of sanitation and drinking water, demonstrating the impacts of access to sanitation and drinking water on human development and economic growth.
- **Strengthen Mutual Accountability** of governments and development partners to ensure the partnership is delivering on its goal of providing sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water. This is achieved by creating a forum for international cooperation based on transparency, and coordinating support to those countries and communities who need it most.

Achieving these goals will **accelerate progress toward achieving the MDGs and ultimately sanitation and water for everyone.**

IMPLEMENTATION

The vision and principles of Sanitation and Water for All are achieved primarily through existing mechanisms and programmes. The vast majority of Sanitation and Water for All's work simply is the work of its partners, positively influenced and guided by the common principles and by the collaboration with the other members. Only when a specific gap is clearly identified might the partners of Sanitation and Water for All might agree to start a new activity to fill that gap.

Currently (early 2010) the partners of Sanitation and Water for All have identified the following key gaps and the targeted responses outlined below.

| Gap | SWA Response |
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| Low political prioritisation, leading to insufficient resource allocation | Provide political and financial decision-makers with both the evidence to support investing in sanitation and drinking water and a political platform to encourage strong international, regional and national commitment to sanitation and water, as well as greater harmonisation and alignment of support. The forum for this will be the annual High Level Meeting. |
| Lack of cohesive national planning frameworks for addressing sanitation and drinking water | Support developing countries to put in place plans and planning frameworks, focusing on countries that are the most off-track. |
| | Provide information, lessons learned and technical assistance where necessary to help develop national planning frameworks. |
| | Create a small pooled fund to support the development of comprehensive planning frameworks, focusing on countries that are the most off-track. |
| Lack of evidence, data and analysis to inform decision-makers | Provide evidence base to decision-makers and support assessments such as the UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) and the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program on Drinking Water and Sanitation (JMP). |
| | Develop best practices, lessons learned and advocacy tools where there are gaps in existing efforts. |
| Poor targeting and unpredictability of financing, resulting in resources failing to reach those most in need | Provide information and data to improve targeting of existing resources. |
| | Hold annual High Level Meetings on Sanitation and Drinking Water to bring together financial decision-makers, sector experts, and donors and improve harmonisation, alignment and information-sharing. |
| Lack of mutual accountability | Hold annual High Level Meetings (based on sector assessments such as GLAAS and JMP) to provide a forum for reviewing progress against commitments made, in the spirit of partnership, transparency and commitment to principles of aid effectiveness. |

The response of the Sanitation and Water for All partnership is focused around three targeted activities to these gaps:

Annual High Level Meeting

The High Level Meeting aims to provide a forum for **direct dialogue** about sanitation and drinking water at the highest levels, namely between Ministers of Finance from developing countries and Ministers of Development Cooperation from donor countries. While the sanitation and water sectors have many existing meetings, there are fundamental issues that require support and commitment from outside the sector and the High Level Meeting addresses this gap.

Focusing on the countries that are the most off-track to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the 2010 High Level Meeting aims to garner political support at the highest levels, and provide a forum for dialogue and mutual accountability. The first High Level Meeting will be hosted by UNICEF on April 23, 2010 in Washington DC.

Improved Information and Evidence to Support Decision Making

Sanitation and Water for All will provide the **evidence base** from which decisions can be made, especially about how to allocate resources efficiently. Evidence will be provided from key assessments such as the UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) and the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program on Drinking Water and Sanitation (JMP). GLAAS will report on the activities and outputs of external support agencies and countries. Four main dimensions of the sector will be reviewed including: 1) service levels, 2) policy and institutional setting, 3) human resource capacity, and 4) financial system capacity. GLAAS will largely draw on existing sources of information to provide an analysis of the actions taken by parties, and whether they are working.

Sanitation and Water for All will also work to develop lessons learned, best practices and advocacy tools where there is a gap in existing efforts.

Provide Support for Strong National Sanitation and Water Planning Frameworks

Sanitation and Water for All supports developing countries to put in place plans and planning frameworks for sanitation and drinking water, including the development of detailed action plans, budgets and monitoring mechanisms. Support will be provided based on requests from countries, and can take the form of technical assistance, or sharing knowledge and lessons learned. In particular, **support will be prioritised for the most off-track countries**. Whenever possible, this assistance will be provided through existing funding sources managed by partners or aligned with regional bodies, and will be developed in response to the unique context of each country.

For cases where sufficient resources do not currently exist, Sanitation and Water for All will also create a **small, clearly-delineated pooled fund** to provide technical assistance and other strategic inputs to help off-track countries develop sustainable national planning frameworks for sanitation and drinking water.

Get Involved

Why developing countries should be involved

- To hold donors and the international system accountable for delivering on their promises and to align their resources behind regional and national priorities and programmes defined by developing countries.
- To ensure that resources are focused on where the needs are greatest, and where they would have the greatest impact on achieving the MDGs, as determined within national planning frameworks
- To raise the political profile of the sanitation and drinking water amongst a broader set of political actors, especially Ministry of Finance
- Where absorptive capacity is a problem, to access coordinated support for addressing capacity building needs.
- To share experiences and knowledge of best practice.

Why donors, development banks and multi-lateral agencies should be involved

- To apply the Paris Declaration principles of mutual accountability, aid-effectiveness and improved donor harmonization/alignment within the sanitation and drinking water sectors.
- To ensure donor efforts and policies are coordinated and focused on achieving the greatest impact.
- To ensure commitments such as the MDGs can be met through Sanitation and Water for All's ability to mobilise and coordinate the multitude of skills and actors required to build absorptive capacity in the most off-track countries, where making investments can be difficult.
- To help build national government capacity to manage their own social and economic development efforts, with donors playing a supportive role
- To scale-up and achieve greater sustainability from donor financing
- To target assistance more strategically
- To be able to measure and demonstrate the impact of aid financing more directly
- To identify where capacity building and technical support could leverage increased results on the ground.

Why civil society should be involved

- To act from within a global partnership, which is a powerful advocacy platform, for greater prioritisation of the sector and action at national and international levels
- To coordinate action with national and international actors within a global framework
- To use the Sanitation and Water for All framework and reports of progress to hold all development partners to account to fulfil their commitments
- To have a voice in the development of national plans and donor practices and priorities.

*For further information about Sanitation and Water for All, please email
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