Sanitation and Water for All

The National Planning for Results Initiative – NPRI

Background

The *Sanitation and Water for All* partnership aims to produce a step change in the performance of the WASH sector through three key areas of activity:

- Prioritising political leadership to reverse the neglect of sanitation and water
- Generating a strong evidence base that supports good decision making
- Strengthening national sector frameworks and targeting investments, so that money is spent where it is most needed and in a way that is most effective

In order to address the third of these three pillars - weaknesses in WASH sector frameworks - the SWA has developed the National Planning for Results Initiative (NPRI). This note, developed by the Country Processes Task Team of the SWA Partnership, outlines the vision for NPRI; it provides an overview of the need for the initiative and its key principles, and outlines how NPRI will be operationalised at both the national and international levels.

The Aim of NPRI

“NPRI aims to catalyse the acceleration of WASH coverage in countries that lack strong and well performing sectors. Responding to demand from developing country partners, NPRI brings together representatives from donor and developing country governments, and other sector partners, to support the constituent elements of an effective sector framework or planning process. These include political will, sector coordination, an overall strategy for sector development, and an institutional capability to monitor and respond to bottlenecks impeding effective performance. NPRI increases the effectiveness of existing resources through pooled activity, drawing on the technical and human resources of SWA partners.”

The Importance of an Effective Sector Framework

UN Water’s *Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water* (the GLAAS) and other analyses of WASH sector finance show a poor targeting of global aid flows. They point to a mismatch between the areas of greatest WASH need and the countries receiving greatest inflows of sector allocable aid.

Furthermore, countries with poorly developed sector frameworks perform less well on extending coverage and are less likely to attract inward sector investment. The lack of a strong country-led WASH framework that is capable of effectively directing and coordinating sector activities deters external assistance and financial inflows from external sources. On the other hand, countries that have put in place the necessary frameworks and capacities to coordinate nationwide service delivery have become more attractive propositions for further investment both from domestic and external sources, leading to a ‘virtuous circle’ of increasing capacity, increased sector finance\(^1\) and accelerated WASH coverage.

Country-level processes for developing and strengthening the WASH framework are therefore central to improve sector performance. Recognising this, more than 15 developing countries specifically identified the need for development and strengthening of a national WASH sector framework (including M&E) during the SWA High Level Meeting in 2012.

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The National Planning for Results Initiative

SWA partners are variously involved in funding, advising and implementing processes to develop and strengthen sector frameworks at the country level, but it is acknowledged that current assistance strategies for the most off-track countries are having only a limited impact. The GLAAS 2012 report shows that in many countries policies and programmes continue to under-emphasize adequate financing and human resource development to sustain the existing infrastructure and to expand access to sanitation, drinking-water and hygiene services. Financing is insufficient and the institutional capacity to absorb what is available is limited\(^2\), whilst coordination and alignment with the sector is often weak.

A mechanism able to bring the full range of skills and competencies of SWA alliance members together in support of developing a viable sector framework, integrated with core government systems, is therefore necessary to provide the conditions for a step change in progress for the WASH sector. The National Planning for Results Initiative (NPRI) is therefore proposed as a joint, coordinated and collaborative multi-stakeholder response to address these bottlenecks and support the development of effective sector frameworks that foster sector reform, and provide a strong platform for national WASH programmes.

Country Focus

Countries fall along a spectrum from weak to strong capacity to deliver WASH services at scale; NPRI will be prioritized in those countries where the need for an internationally coordinated response is greatest, and the opportunity to leverage efficiency gains and better value for money for all partners is largest. NPRI activities will therefore be focused in countries where the following criteria apply:

1. There is a clearly articulated demand from country-led processes\(^3\)
2. The country is off track for the water and/or sanitation MDGs
3. Sector framework is absent or weak
4. In-country donor coordination is absent or weak
   OR
   A strong coordinated donor presence exists, but the added value of NPRI support is clearly articulated

However, it is important to note that NPRI is just one element of SWA; the wider Partnership will continue to work together through dialogue in all countries, in order to address aid effectiveness and sector performance constraints.

Key Principles

The National Planning for Results Initiative is based around a number of key principles:

- **NPRI will be driven by country demand**
  Ultimately, progress towards an effective sector framework must be made at country level, led by national governments, with the engagement of finance ministries as well as sanitation and water-related ministries. Country demand is therefore fundamental to NPRI; high-level buy-in will be essential in all cases, and activities should be negotiated and agreed openly with the host government, tailored to the specific priorities identified by each country.

- **NPRI will bring a catalytic effect to in-country activities**
  NPRI will use the influence and coordinating power of the SWA Partnership to bring actors together and catalyse a higher level of interest in sector reform. In turn, by supporting the development of an effective sector framework, NPRI will stimulate both the development of sector policies and strategies,

\(^2\) 2012. UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) – Report Highlights

\(^3\) Note: This will not preclude countries who may wish to articulate demand, but who are not initially aware of NPRI.
and the strengthening of institutions, systems, and service delivery mechanisms that will prepare the ground for more detailed sub-national planning and large-scale implementation.

In this way NPRI will have a catalytic effect, creating the clarity, accountability and effectiveness that will allow the sector to effectively absorb, prioritise and attract internal and external investment.

- **NPRI will complement existing activities, focusing on value addition**
  NPRI activities will be initiated on the basis of evidence of a solid gap: where there is a need for strengthening the national sector framework that is not being met through existing mechanisms in country or within the existing dialogue between development cooperation partners, and where a joint SWA response will have a comparative advantage. NPRI will match demand with available sector resources, utilising the human resource specialisms of implementing agencies and developing country governments, and drawing on existing bilateral and multilateral budgets.

  Where appropriate, NPRI will draw on existing tools and initiatives that are in support of similar outcomes, such as UNDP’s Bottleneck Analysis Tool (WASH BAT) and service delivery assessments. NPRI will avoid displacing or substituting for existing national efforts on planning or sector strengthening. It is intended to act as a pooled resource of SWA partners where these national level processes are absent, unsupported or weak.

- **NPRI will be delivered in partnership**
  Underlying NPRI is recognition that an effective sector framework can benefit from inputs from a wide range of stakeholders that have a diversity of useful skills and capabilities. SWA partners will therefore work collectively to support the NPRI process by engaging in discussions and participating in national level processes as appropriate. The strength of the SWA partnership is the potential to bring a strong combination of diverse agencies and specialist skills to broaden support for a national WASH sector framework. NPRI will also seek to collaborate with non-SWA member organisations in country, in order to strengthen the initiative and avoid duplication or clashes in activities.

- **NPRI will strengthen national capacity through cyclical inputs**
  NPRI’s catalytic role aims to support sustained national level momentum on building the reforms necessary to improve sector performance by strengthening capacity at the national level. It will aim to embed the domestic capacity to monitor sector performance, analyse structural bottlenecks and develop and pursue remedial policy and reform options. NPRI activities will therefore be temporary, although periodic revisiting by bilateral and multilateral partners may be required to ensure continued support for sector processes throughout the planning and implementation cycle.

- **NPRI will contribute to the knowledge base in the sector**
  To support NPRI activities the CPTT will develop and disseminate a catalogue of relevant existing tools and guidance documents. NPRI will also play an active role in creating an enabling learning environment, by disseminating experiences from country level engagement and facilitating south-south learning, with the intention of creating a solid and accessible knowledge base in support of effective sector frameworks. It is possible that in future NPRI experiences may lead to the development of new guidance.

**Operationalising NPRI**

NPRI will support the development of nationally owned sector frameworks, by catalysing the political will for genuinely country-led approaches. Inputs will be adapted according to country specificities, and donor partners will avoid laying out blueprints or conditionality. However, while avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, there a number of ‘key building blocks’ of an effective sector framework that NPRI activities will seek to support:
- **An overall policy/strategy for sector development** with ambitious but realistic targets and goals to extend coverage
- **Sector dialogue and coordination** processes between principal ministries, sub-national authorities and wider stakeholders including donors, civil society, private sector and consumer groups, with clear roles and responsibilities for delivering the sector strategy
- **Performance monitoring** and analysis of data, trends and bottlenecks that form the basis of evidence-based decision-making and policy responses
- **Institutional arrangements** that provide the legal and regulatory frameworks
- **A sector financing strategy** with identified resource requirements and the sources of finance required to bridge funding gaps.

Examples of indicative activities that may be undertaken within these ‘blocks’ are given in Box 1. Above all, NPRI is a pooling of SWA partners human resources to support these activities; whilst NPRI has a small pool of finance to assist in facilitating national and international support – such as national level conferences and workshops and the participation of South-South cooperation – it is not currently a source of large scale sector finance.

**Box 1. With the provision of supporting technical and human resource inputs, the following are some indicative NPRI Activities In-Country:**

- **An overall policy/strategy for sector development**
  - Support analysis of sector needs and challenges (e.g. CSOs) – with support for analyses of critical bottlenecks standing in the way of progress
  - Identify sector objectives – assist in the development of broad-based national level support for credible targets and reforms paths
  - Support the development of a sector strategy or a strategic sector development plan
  - Bring strategic inputs from NPRI partners to strengthen different stages of a planning process including assessment, consultation, decision-making, strategizing, implementation, and establishment of frameworks for monitoring and adjustment.
  - Strengthen core capacities to facilitate and sustain the planning process

- **Sector coordination**
  - Strengthen mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogue through supportive inputs and, where appropriate, providing some financial support
  - Support facilitation and coordination country-led planning processes
  - Advocate and support the acceleration of the preparation of IFI and bilateral projects that support and are aligned with national plans.

- **Performance monitoring**
  - Support the establishment frameworks for performance monitoring and reporting
  - Support process documentation
  - Support to strengthening in-country capacities for systematic reflection on sector progress, exchange and lesson learning
  - Support dissemination of lessons and good practice

- **Institutional arrangements**
  - Support the establishment of clear legal and institutional arrangements

- **A sector financing strategy**
  - Support the development of a financing framework (multi-annual investment plan or MTEF)
  - Enhance the ability of the sector to effectively absorb, spend, and attract funds
  - Support the integration of sector processes with country planning, budget and procurement systems

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4 Key building blocks to national plans – WaterAid 2009 (see Annex 1 for extract)
NPRI will be overseen by the Country Processes Task Team (CPTT) of SWA, with the support of the SWA Secretariat. Countries seeking to initiate NPRI activities will be expected to follow the following steps:

1. **Exhaust options at the country level**
   Improving aid effectiveness and sector performance in countries that already have functioning development assistance frameworks and a strong coordinated donor agency presence should not warrant an internationally coordinated response; national authorities and development partners should be able to address most sector bottlenecks by working together directly. Requests for NPRI activities to diagnose bottlenecks or develop and strengthen a national WASH sector framework should therefore not be directed to SWA until efforts to identify and address gaps through country level discussions have been exhausted.

2. **Submit official request for support to the SWA Secretariat**
   If critical gaps remain once options at the country level have been exhausted, demand for NPRI should be signalled through a formal letter from Ministers to the SWA Secretariat. Where a coordinated donor presence already exists in-country, this letter should also be endorsed by the local coordination platform. When submitting a request for NPRI, countries will be expected to demonstrate how they themselves will support and contribute to the NPRI process and how they expect an NPRI engagement to be followed through.

3. **SWA partners respond in partnership**
   Official requests for NPRI will be received by the SWA Secretariat. The CPTT and representatives from SWA will engage in an exploratory dialogue with the requesting authorities to consider, and possibly approve, the engagement with NPRI on behalf of the SWA Partnership. Once a request has been approved, the entry point for NPRI should be through dialogue with SWA Partners in country: this will inform how partners work together in-country and the relationships they choose to form in order to make progress. Applicants may fall into two categories: countries that have not yet managed to identify and fully articulate their specific needs, and those that are aware of NPRI and have the ability

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The *Liberia Compact: An Example of NPRI in Action*

Although significant progress had been made in the development of WASH policies in Liberia, with no clear planning framework, WASH sector partners were finding it difficult to implement the policies. The sector was fragmented, with responsibilities for different functions falling between a number of different ministries. There was also a lack of coordination between development partners, partly as a result of the lead donor having no permanent presence in the country. This resulted in opaque reporting of activities and results, and agencies either overlapping their programmes or omitting areas of need. The government had little control over planning for the sector and donors could not be sure that their contributions were well spent.

The impetus for engagement with SWA came out of meetings held initially between the Liberia WASH Consortium and WaterAid, but the momentum to succeed came when Government of Liberia representatives began discussions with SWA in November 2009. At subsequent national stakeholder meetings in 2010 Liberia WASH partners garnered enthusiastic support from SWA partners, including agreement to attend a Joint Mission in Monrovia in April 2011.

The Joint Mission was led by the Government of Liberia and endorsed by the President of Liberia, who personally sent invitations to development partners. It was held under the banner of the GoL and SWA, and attended by SWA Partners, the SWA Secretariat and many of Liberia’s Development Partners.

The Joint Mission led to the drafting and endorsement of the Liberia WASH compact, a two-year plan which provided a clear focus for all stakeholders in the Liberia a WASH Sector. The most significant result of the Compact is the improved coordination and networking across the WASH sector in Liberia, through the establishment of the National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Committee, which has given the government more effective control and direction of the sector. Impacts of this included increasing the effectiveness of programme implementation, improving the coordination and alignment of donors and consequently greatly increased optimism about the achievability of the GoL’s vision for the WASH sector. This in turn has increased the willingness of donors to invest.

*Source: The Development of the Liberia WASH Compact: a Report on Process*
to articulate what they hope to achieve from the NPRI process, and why this is not forthcoming from existing mechanisms and agencies in country.

NPRI will focus on high-level convening on the basis of a dialogue between developing country governments and other SWA partners, with funding coming from individual donors and national authorities supporting NPRI activities. Developing countries themselves will be responsible for leading the initiative, and will collaborate with other stakeholders to appoint a primary engagement partner, who will provide the interface between the country and the SWA partnership.

Outstanding challenges for NPRI

1. NPRI is not a source of large-scale sector allocable aid. It is a “pooling of activities of SWA partners” with the aim of generating the political will for accelerated coverage and supporting countries’ efforts to build their national level capacity to sustain an effective sector framework. However, questions arise around those countries that have built up a serious commitment and capacity to effectively absorb and utilise additional finance and yet still face substantial funding gaps. What role does the SWA have in mobilising the additional finance from external sources?

2. It is hoped that NPRI will be operationalised in those countries that are ‘donor isolated’ or countries where the capacity of existing donors is limited. Where is the additional donor support going to come from for those countries that are not donor priority countries?

3. So far, the support for NPRI has come from a limited number of agencies. How far are SWA partners able and willing to commit additional resources and capacity in support of this initiative?

4. How can NPRI be applied in countries where central government does not have the influence to drive the WASH sector on a national basis? Is it necessary to explore joint action at the state or local level?

Next Steps

In 2012 the CPTT will initially focus on developing NPRI pilots with 3-5\(^5\) eligible countries that have already expressed an initial (informal) interest in NPRI, as a proof of concept. It is anticipated that support will then expand further if resources are available.

**August 2012:** Endorsement of NPRI by the SWA Steering Committee

**August - November 2012:** Targeted outreach to selected pilot countries to initiate NPRI process

**August 2012 – March 2013:** Ongoing implementation of NPRI in pilot countries

**November 2012:** Face-to-face CPTT meeting to review progress and begin discussion of 2013 work plan

**Early 2013:** Detailed review of NPRI in pilot countries; further roll out

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Clare Battle and Henry Northover – September 2012

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\(^5\) Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Sierra Leone, South Sudan
Annex 1 – Key Elements of National Plans

The following outline some of the building blocks on national plans identified from a survey of stronger WASH sector plans

1. Sector policy/strategy

Policy/strategy framework: An essential requirement is the existence of a clear set of sector policies and nationally defined goals, such as a national water policy, which are closely linked to the national development framework or Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Policies provide a vision for sector development and outline specific objectives. Country ownership is an important condition for the serious commitment to achieving the sector’s goals. Although this ownership is difficult to define, it can act to build the links to other sectors that affect the effectiveness of WASH policies. Clear examples are health, education, urban development and environment policies.

Policies are elaborated through strategies for implementation within a specific timeframe, setting out the required measures for achieving policy objectives as well as specific targets. These should be ambitious but realistic and adapted to country-specific challenges and capacity constraints. Ideally, further elaboration of integrated sub-sector strategies will be achieved, with a specific emphasis on sanitation if not included from the outset. Legal (laws, acts and decrees) and regulatory frameworks exist in all countries, but often need to be revised to complement the policy framework, enshrine institutional responsibilities, establish standards and prevent contradictions and overlaps.

Policy/strategy content: As an integral part of the national development process sector policies and strategies should be specifically adapted to country contexts with a clear poverty focus. Specific pro-poor targeting and service extension measures are desirable, as well as provisions to address wider challenges such as rapid urbanisation, climate variability, contamination, conflict etc. Policies and strategies should be adapted to sector characteristics, providing a clear analysis of bottlenecks and priority areas for investment. They should also ideally take account of cross-cutting issues such as integrated water resource management, livelihoods and economic growth, equity of service distribution, gender and governance. Some agencies also specify the inclusion of strategies to address sanitation and water in emergencies.

2. Sector coordination

Sector-wide approaches (SWAs) are increasingly undertaken in the sanitation and water sector, allowing a more coherent and engaged planning process in a fragmented and multi-institutional setting, regardless of the aid modalities used. Line-ministry leadership and partnership with the Ministry of Finance is deemed essential for an effective SWA, while the existence of a Sector Working Group that ensures clear institutional accountability and involves all relevant ministries (including health and education) is desirable. Donors should coordinate their country-level operations to the highest possible extent as part of their commitment to improved harmonisation under the Paris Declaration. This coordination can be achieved through national or sector level donor coordination groups that facilitate communication with government, avoid duplication and reduce transaction costs, ideally with a nominated lead donor representing other development partners.

Multi-stakeholder platforms should be established to allow for a meaningful engagement of all relevant stakeholders in sector decision-making processes.
at different levels. The participation of the private sector and non-governmental organisations lends credibility to sector planning processes and helps to ensure more equitable targeting of investments. Ideally, civil society organisations (CSOs) and service user groups should also be engaged in holding government and service providers accountable. A desirable form of CSO participation is the existence of a coordinated network or representative body, and meaningful public participation should include representation of marginalised sections of the population as well as media dissemination of information to enable public debate.

3. Sector finance
The sector budget should be formulated as part of the national budget process, with a clearly defined process involving all relevant stakeholders. The budget should reflect sector priorities and be realistic in its estimates. Ideally, it should include explicit targets for pro-poor expenditure. The sector budgeting framework should be linked to the General MTEF (or Medium Term Expenditure Framework) and a consolidated Sector MTEF or SIP (Sector Investment Programme), which is revised annually to reflect budget realities. A national sector financing assessment should also include a realistic appraisal of absorption capacity.

There should be transparency in resource allocation, particularly from national to decentralised levels, with a breakdown of capex and opex requirements; Subsector Sector Investment Plans reflecting the size and needs of the sector are also desirable. Joint financing agreements between government and donors are increasingly used to improve sector alignment; an essential aspect is a commitment on the donors’ side to a policy of progressive alignment with national systems (which may or may not include a resource-pooling arrangement), ideally leading to donors’ use of government systems and a move towards longer term predictable funding to enable better planning and implementation. Where donor funding is off-budget, this should be accounted for and included as part of sectoral spending. Sustainable sector financing mechanisms (eg. sustainable cost recovery) are also considered an essential component, and should aim to include specific pro-poor measures.

4. Institutional arrangements
Institutional roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined with a clear separation of policy-making, regulatory and service delivery roles to prevent conflicts of interest, establish clear lines of accountability, and responsibilities for target-setting and progress monitoring. Ideally, this should include institutional mechanisms for working across the various sectors that impact on and benefit from sanitation and water. Capacity building and human resource development plans are a crucial aspect and require systematic analysis of capacity building needs and human resource requirements. Specification of capacity needs at various levels, eg. in sector institutions and local government, as well as in other ministries and sectors is also desirable.

Decentralisation reforms, implemented widely and to various degrees in many low-income countries, must be taken into account as the context in which sector plans are financed and implemented. A clear definition of the central government’s role in a decentralised context is essential, and should be taken into account in SWAp arrangements. The WASH sectors should keep pace with broader decentralisation reforms and devolve responsibilities as well as adequate resources to lower tiers of government administration. Participation and inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders is crucial for effective planning and implementation of WASH services. A participatory planning process is generally
considered essential. Ideally, this should be accompanied by efforts to strengthen the capacity of local authorities for effective information management.

5. Sector performance monitoring
Effective monitoring and evaluation depends on improving the reliability of sector data as a basis for setting realistic targets and monitoring processes of sector development. Establishing sector information management systems which link financial inputs, outputs and outcomes is therefore desirable. Accountability mechanisms should be clearly defined, together with an agreed framework for sector performance assessment. Ideally, there will be procedures in place for routine monitoring of performance against specified (realistic) outputs and mechanisms whereby results can be fed back into policies and strategies. Independent monitoring of sector plans is essential, with public access to information to ensure transparency at national and local levels. Ideally, there should also be a mechanism for incorporating CSO feedback into decision-making processes.

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11 Extract from *Aid Compacts Built Around National Plans* – WaterAid Discussion Paper 2009