

# The Mutual Accountability Mechanism: An overview of the first commitments and next steps



## The Mutual Accountability Mechanism at the 2019 SMM

### An overview of the Mutual Accountability Mechanism

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) require that governments engage with all actors through participatory [multi-stakeholder processes](#), and that they demonstrate accountability in the decisions that they are taking in ensuring universal access to water and sanitation services, leaving no-one behind. Accountability is equally a corner stone of the human rights framework.

SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism is designed to respond to these obligations of participation and accountability. It departs from the vision of "mutual accountability" under the Millennium Development Goals (often a means of just holding developing countries accountable to their donors) to ensure that every partner is accountable to all other partners at national and global levels. It reflects the vision, principles, obligations, requirements and challenges set by the SDGs, as well as incorporating the SWA Framework of [Guiding Principles](#), [Collaborative Behaviours](#) and [Building Blocks](#).

The latest Sector Ministers' Meeting held in April 2019 in San José, Costa Rica provided the first chance for SWA's partners to table commitments,<sup>1</sup> and most country partners and many other constituency partners took advantage of this opportunity. 48 countries presented 159 commitments, with other partners from external support agencies, civil society, the private sector and research and learning institutions between them making a further 83 commitments at the national level. 18 organizations and networks made commitments at the global level, with 54 commitments made between them. All commitments made for the 2019 SMM are available in [a powerpoint](#) on the Sanitation and Water for All website.

Partners making Commitments SMM 2019	National	Global
Countries	47	
Private sector	4	4
Civil society	15	3
Research and learning institutions	5	4
External support agencies	47	7

<sup>1</sup> Most country and other constituency partners' commitments have been submitted to the SWA database (39 countries). For eight countries (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Chad, Haiti, Niger, Portugal, Sierra Leone and South Sudan) their commitments have been extracted from their Country Briefs prepared for the Sector Ministers' Meeting. Some other constituency commitments have also not yet been submitted to the database, but have been extracted from Country Briefs.

## Country Commitments

Of the 39 countries that presented their commitments through the SWA database, 34 were made through national multi-stakeholder discussions that included at least one other constituency. These were often part of broader multi-stakeholder efforts to prepare for the Sector Ministers' Meeting, or part of a Joint Sector Review that had already been planned for the sector more generally. This is a significant achievement for SWA and the Mutual Accountability Mechanism, and an indicator of the increased focus on supporting multi-stakeholder country processes.

In 19 of the countries where commitments were made, partners from other constituencies made supporting commitments. In four countries, CSOs made commitments, even where their country government did not. Commitments were made at the national level by one external support agencies (in 47 countries), five research and learning institutions, four private sector and fifteen civil society organizations or networks. The majority of these commitments directly support the achievement of the country's commitments.

Overall, 41 of all country commitments (26%) were on outputs, for example, increasing access to water and sanitation, or elimination of open defecation, and 118 were related to sector strengthening (74%), such as strengthening strategies and collaboration and creating new financing mechanisms. Many of these commitments can be linked to different aspects of the SWA Framework of guiding principles, building blocks and collaborative behaviours.

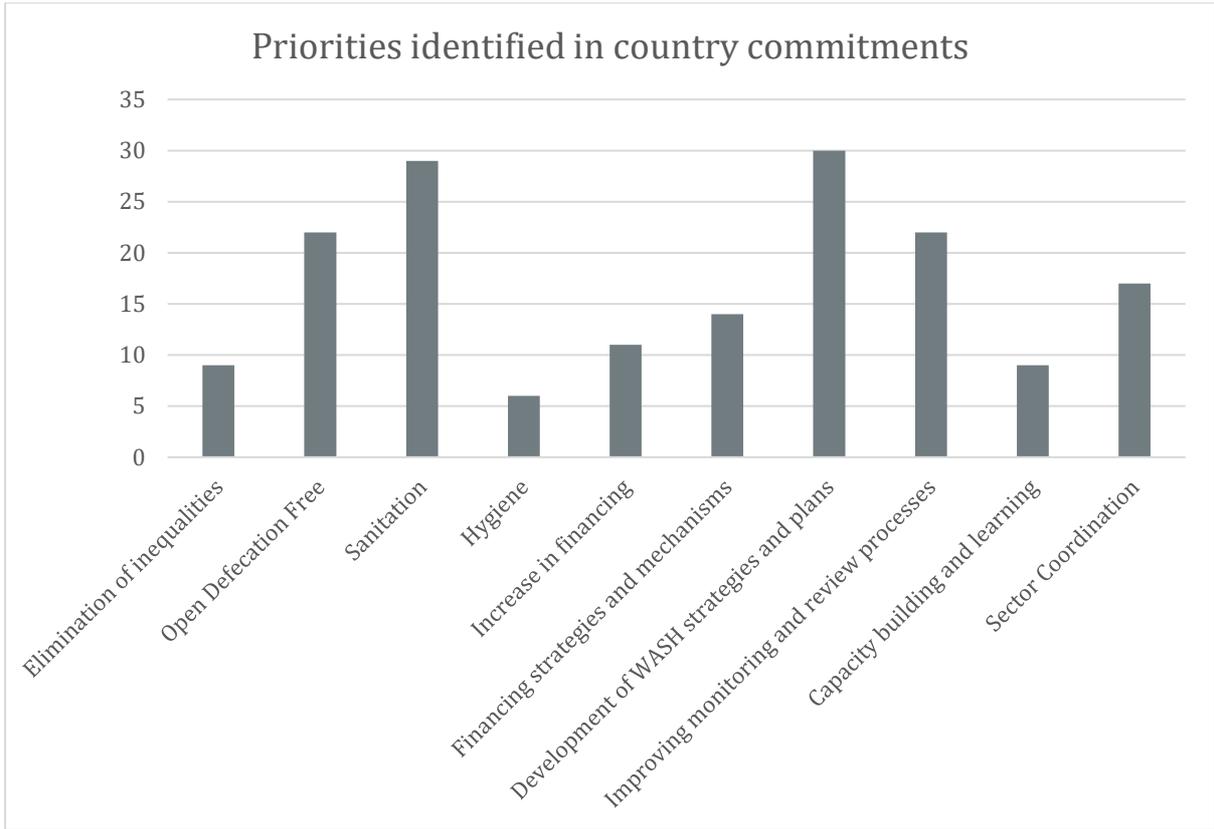
As can be seen in the chart below, 9 countries made commitments relating to leave no-one behind. Only one made specific mention of gender as a particular inequality to be eliminated.

More countries made commitments for particular actions to increase access to sanitation (29), and 22 of these made a commitment to address open defecation. Hygiene was mentioned by 6 countries, and water resources management was also mentioned by 6 countries.

As one would expect in an SWA-led process, many countries mentioned increasing financing (11) and 14 committed to creating or strengthening financing mechanisms for WASH. Two countries specifically made commitments to increase financing for the elimination of inequalities or to end open defecation. Collaboration and cooperation were the subject of commitments for 17 countries.

The issue that was identified as important by most countries was the creation or improvement of policies, strategies and plans (30 countries). Strengthening monitoring (22) and capacity building (9) were also identified by many countries as subjects for commitments.

While SWA's partners did not themselves link their commitments to any specific part of the SWA framework, as can be seen from the above analysis, the commitments can be linked to the guiding principles, building blocks (and to a lesser extent) the collaborative behaviours. This will be explored in future iterations, along with links to other global and regional accountability processes, as outlined in the section below on 'next steps'.



## Global commitments

At the global level, 18 organizations or networks made commitments, including 7 external support agencies, 4 research and learning institutions, 3 private sector organizations or networks and 3 civil society organizations and networks. One constituency, the private sector, made commitments as a stakeholder group.

Of these global organizations' commitments, as with the country commitments, many have identified the importance of collaboration and sector coordination (12), and support to national governance and policies (11). Capacity building and knowledge management were included in the commitments of six organizations. Strengthening monitoring processes was mentioned by five global organizations and networks, while five made a commitment relating to the elimination of inequalities, and work towards 'leaving no-one behind'. One external support agency specifically committing to, *"ensure that all the WASH services we support are disability inclusive."*

As with country partners, the global organizations and networks commit to addressing the lack of access to sanitation, although only one organization specifically mentioned eliminating open defecation in their commitments.

Compared to country partners, few global organizations and networks committed to increasing financing (1) or identifying financing mechanisms (2) which suggests a gap between what is required by countries and what global organizations and networks are delivering.

Of the global organizations and networks making commitments, only two stated that the commitments were made through a multi-stakeholder process.

All global partners that submitted commitments to the SWA database provided timelines for achieving their commitments, ranging from 2019 to 2030 (and one outlier with an end-date of 2050), with around two thirds planning on achieving their commitments by the end of 2021.

In terms of monitoring and reviewing commitments, only two countries and two global organizations did not provide information on how they would monitor the commitments, although it is expected that more work will need to be done to make sure that these processes will have to be checked for robustness, as for many commitments (43) there is no source documentation. As noted above, 22 countries have identified strengthening monitoring and review as commitments, which will hopefully support the monitoring and review of these commitments within the broader needs to monitor and review progress towards the SDGs.

## Next steps

We are now planning the next steps for the Mutual Accountability Mechanism, with the proposed actions to be taken by the SWA secretariat, steering committee members and SWA partners to be defined in the next few months. These include:

1. Further consolidation of commitments that have been made to date, both strengthening existing government commitments (making them SMARTer), as well as working with other constituency partners to make supporting commitments.
2. Guidance for new partners on how to engage with the Mutual Accountability Mechanism and how to submit commitments.

3. Analysis and review of commitments that have been made to date, including linking to the SWA framework and other global and regional accountability processes, such as Ngor Commitments, the outcomes of LatinoSan, the UN High-level Political Forum and others.
4. Creating a dedicated webpage for each country on the Sanitation and Water for All website, which provides details of country and partner commitments, and the extent to which these have been achieved.
5. Prepare for events such as Stockholm World Water Week, where we will be discussing the Mutual Accountability Mechanism as well as other accountability processes, as part of efforts to reach the SDGs.
6. Guidance on each constituency's role on the process of monitoring and reviewing the commitments, at national and global levels:
7. Preparing countries and other partners to make commitments prior to the 2020 Finance Ministers' Meeting
8. Put in place a broader action-research programme to explore the impact of the Mutual Accountability Mechanism on national planning and review processes, on the wider SWA partnership and on the WASH sector more broadly.