

SECTOR MINISTERS' MEETING 2019

San José — Costa Rica — 4-5 April



Summary of Webinar:

Unpacking the meaning of Leave No One Behind and how to use finance to end inequalities

30 and 31 January, 2019

More than 150 participants from 50 countries participated in the webinar on “unpacking the meaning of leave no one behind and how to use finance to end inequalities.” The webinar is part of the 2019 SWA webinar series focussing on “Leave no one behind” which is also the theme of the Sector Ministers’ Meeting that will take place on 4 and 5 April in San Jose, Costa Rica. Leave no one behind is one of SWA’s seven guiding principles and is at the heart of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals which call for universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

The webinar highlighted the explicit focus of the SDGs on reducing inequalities and the aim to “leave no one behind.” The 2030 agenda states that SDG indicators should be disaggregated to enable countries to monitor efforts to close the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Data should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location or other characteristics.

When planning for the achievement of the SDGs, governments and their partners are to use data and evidence to determine populations who are marginalised and how to put the furthest behind first while sustaining services for those who have. The webinar covered the extent to which national processes have included this ambitious agenda.

While more recent data is forthcoming, the 2017 UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water indicated that most of the countries that responded to the survey have specific measures for reaching poor populations in their WASH policies and plans. However, monitoring of progress to extend services to the same populations takes place in only half of the countries that responded. Even fewer countries consistently apply financial measures to target resources to poor populations. Countries in lower income groups were less able to consistently apply specific measures to target resources to poor populations.

The webinar also focussed on how finance can be used to end inequalities. Finance is a crucial part of the SWA framework. It is a critical aspect of what the sector needs to deliver services. The ways through which partners channel and use resources are also a critical component of efficiency in the sector. Finance is therefore both a “what” and “how” of the WASH sector. However, there are major

challenges faced by the sector including – lack of knowledge on what the investment needs to meet the targets are; unknown existing financing envelope; significant financing gap; low level of sector efficiency; and the lack of financing strategies to among others, effectively mobilise and target resources.

Some participants highlighted the difficulties anticipated especially where data is missing or where there are political challenges such as for populations deemed “stateless”. Other participants wanted examples of plans that adequately address inequalities. In some cases the challenge is to convince sector stakeholders to prioritise WASH investments to eliminate inequalities while there are efforts to improve coverage. Examples of success on planning, and targeting resources are welcome.

The SMM, through its dynamic Ministerial Dialogues, will be a platform for ministers to focus on achieving financial viability among WASH service providers, while reaching the poor and vulnerable with affordable services. This will encompass topics such as whether and how to raise tariffs, how to select right service models/levels and improve operational efficiency to reduce costs, how to protect the poor when prices are not affordable and how to cover the financing gap for investment including grants leveraging private sector in public-private partnerships.