

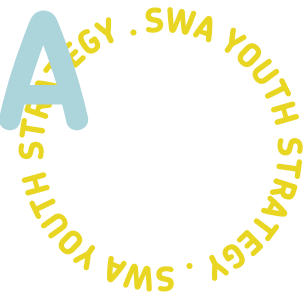
SWA YOUTH STRATEGY

2021-2025



SANITATION
AND WATER
FOR ALL

WHY AN SWA YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?



The **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda** reaffirms the commitment to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, that allow genuine participation by everyone in all countries. Governments alone cannot deliver the ambitious SDG targets.

To “leave no one behind” in reaching the SDGs would naturally require engaging with a broad range of stakeholders, including youth. According to the latest United Nations estimates of the world’s population, in 2019, youth numbered 1.2 billion persons between ages 15 and 24 years, or around one in every six persons worldwide.

The inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach at SWA’s core, demands more explicit efforts to work with this population group, towards increasing youth participation in global and national accountability processes as well as to ensuring greater representation of youth in national, regional and global forums. Furthermore, empowering the youth within the partnership to take action towards SWA’s vision of “water, sanitation and hygiene for all, always and everywhere”.

With this Youth Strategy, the Sanitation and Water for All global partnership **aims to include and amplify the voices of young leaders, advocates and professionals within the partnership and in the sector.**

This will not only help empower the youth in developing their capacity to be leaders and negotiators in the sector but will also tackle a critical sectoral challenge, i.e. scaling up action and deepening the impact on SDGs.





“Effective planning, implementation and monitoring of water and sanitation depends on engaging with the whole of society, especially the involvement of women and young people and the integration of gender equality considerations.”

United Nations SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework (2020)



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Young people are key stakeholders in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector – from being directly affected by **lack of service provisions in schools** (especially girls and women) and in communities, to **marginalization in decision-making**.

Despite being a significant political constituency, young people are not consulted in 2 out of 3 countries during the process of preparing poverty reduction strategies or national development plans.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the key objective of this Youth Strategy is to guide the SWA partnership to:

"use SWA processes and activities to support youth in their role as dynamic agents of change in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector, while also using the youth's voice within the partnership to better design and implement SWA processes and activities."

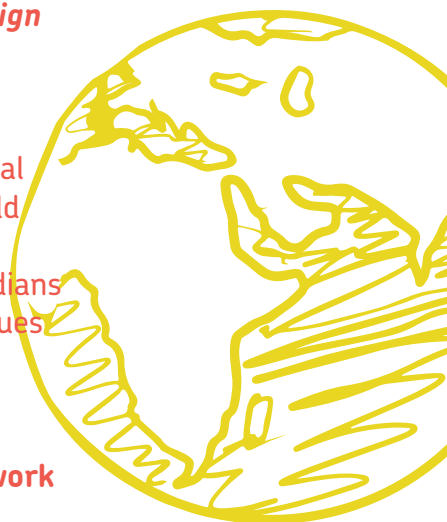
Youth are not just beneficiaries, but also **agents of change** – they have distinct voices and needs that can be brought in and heard during national participatory processes, they are political pressure groups both in the field and in digital spaces, and they are now increasingly seen as **innovators** and **entrepreneurs**. More importantly, they are future leaders and guardians of the sector, and they have a right to be engaged now on the critical issues which they will inherit.

The objective of the SWA Youth Strategy is aligned with SWA's broader mission and fits within the broader **"SWA Partnership Strategy Framework 2020-2030"**.

Within this new strategic framework, one of the key objectives of the partnership is to use SWA's convening power to galvanize political leadership to strengthen multi-stakeholder approaches, such as enhancing youth participation in decision-making and accountability processes.

For instance, SWA will serve as a platform for integrating the voice of youth at **SWA High-Level Meetings** and increased participation in national and regional multi-stakeholder processes.

As some youth-led (and youth-focused) organizations are already part of SWA, this strategy would help guide the partnership in integrating existing youth organizations into the work of the partnership more effectively. This would also provide opportunities for other youth-led organizations or networks to become partners of SWA and enhancing the engagement of youth within all the SWA constituencies.



To develop the SWA Youth Engagement strategy, 16 SWA partners (including some youth-led and youth Focused organizations) were engaged by the SWA Secretariat to discuss the initial orientations of this strategy. The SWA Civil Society and Private Sector Constituencies have inputted in the draft strategy and have agreed to co-propose this strategy to the partnership.

⁽¹⁾ 'Youth, Political participation and decision-making' - A factsheet prepared by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Focal Point on Youth, UNDESA. Link [here](#).



“Safe water, sanitation and hygiene are crucial for all, but access to these services has a particular impact on children and young people. In addition to the direct effect on health, there are wider impacts on education and wellbeing, for girls in particular. Because of this, young voices must be heard and their particular needs supported. Recognizing these needs, SWA partners working with young people developed the SWA Youth Strategy. It aims to include and amplify the voices of young leaders, advocates and professionals within the partnership, and make their participation meaningful and impactful.”

Catarina de Albuquerque, CEO, Sanitation and Water for All



BENEFITS FOR YOUTH ENGAGING IN SWA



The political and civic engagement of young people will determine not only the course of their own lives, but that of the world, and the success of the 2030 Agenda is dependent on how committed youth is to its achievement.

It is undeniable that there is a need to engage with youth to ensure SWA achieves its goals. The youth perspective will not only enrich the SWA processes, but it brings in the intergenerational vision needed to achieve the partnership's mission.

From the youth's perspective, there are several arguments why it's beneficial from them to want to participate in SWA's processes and activities, **arguments that are cross-cutting among all SWA constituencies:**

1.

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

By being a part of multi-stakeholder platforms, sector events, and other initiatives, youth representatives can advocate for youth-specific, from menstrual hygiene to support to youth entrepreneurship and innovation.

2.

NETWORKING

By meeting and engaging with professionals from different constituencies, countries, backgrounds, that could support and mentor young professionals. This should also include access to high-level decision-makers (e.g. ministers, CEO's).

3.

LEARNING & EXCHANGE PLATFORM

By joining SWA's virtual and in-person events, youth representatives can share with and learn from peers and others.

4.

AN AMPLIFIER

SWA's communications platforms exist to amplify the joint activities of partners. Campaigns, studies and reports, new technologies and business models can reach wider audiences more easily.



“Young people are not only passive victims of the problems related to the water, sanitation and climate change, but also part of the solution. The place that SWA gives us at the table is key - so that they don’t decide our future without us.”

Nicole Becker, 2021 SWA Youth Champion



DEFINING YOUTH IN SWA



SWA will be applying the following criteria⁽²⁾ to define youth within the partnership:

AGE:

SWA endorses the United Nations definition of Youth, i.e. *young people between the ages of 15 and 24*. However, as this strategy aims to also engage with young advocates and professionals⁽³⁾, the upper limit in age will be taken as 30 years⁽⁴⁾.

GENDER:

The intersectionality of age and gender often creates extra barriers for girls and women. Therefore, SWA partnership, through its activities, will encourage and promote the participation of girls and women and others who are regularly excluded in the policy circles.

EXPERIENCE:

In terms of experience, our target audience is youth with prior interaction or knowledge in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector and awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. For this strategy, this would include members of youth networks, youth organizations or young professionals and/or influencers.

⁽²⁾ The criteria are adapted from Rural Water Supply Network young professionals' strategy to apply to the SWA context. ⁽³⁾ SWA partner, Global Water Partnership defines young professionals' as recent graduates under the age of 35 who have some work experience. ⁽⁴⁾ The upper limit in the age considers the challenges of the youth living in developing countries as they might encounter some limitations while studying and gaining necessary work experiences till the age of 24.



ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Annual workplans will be developed by the Secretariat and approved by the SWA Steering Committee. These workplan will follow the yearly priorities set by the Steering Committee and the CEO. Additionally, the youth representatives within the partnership will be given a voice and will be involved in the planning and implementation of activities to better cater to the youth's priorities, in alignment with the SWA Strategic Framework.

1.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

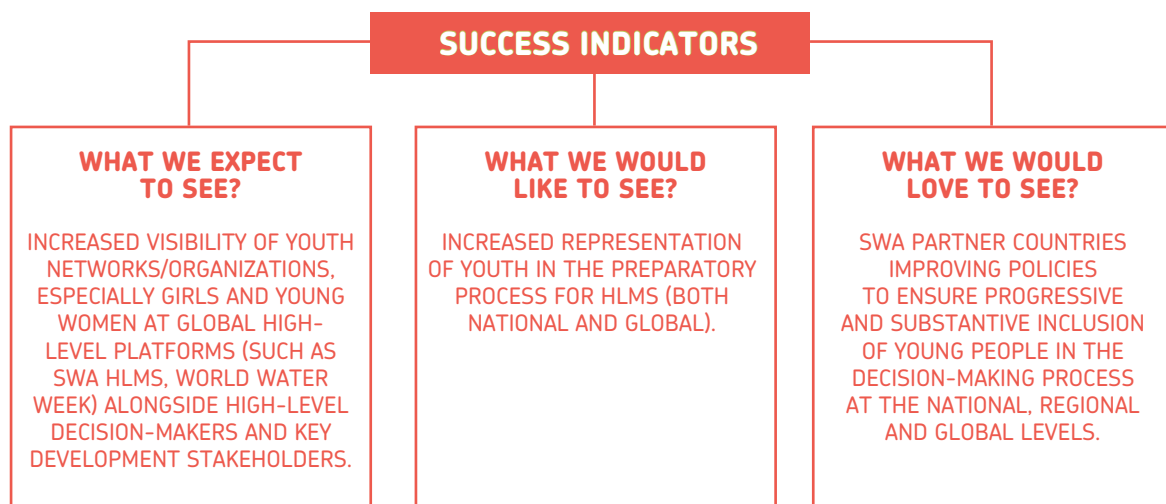
The SWA partnership will aim to enhance youth participation and representation at SWA High-Level Meetings (HLMs) by creating additional opportunities/spaces for young people, such as:

- **Youth speaker/presenter/panellist/rapporteur/observer at SWA HLMs** such as the Sector Ministers' Meeting and Finance Ministers' Meeting, or other HLMs organized by SWA, for example at key conferences such as World Water Week, or the COP climate summits.
- **Supporting participation of youth representatives in the HLMs** wherein, SWA partnership will fund the cost of travel, accommodation and per diems. The SWA global partnership upholds and practices the principles of inclusion and diversity in the selection of constituency representatives for the SWA High-Level Meetings. For instance, in preparing the Civil Society delegation for HLMs, the selection criteria prioritize gender and regional balance. Similar criteria should be followed while choosing youth delegates for the SWA HLMs.



INCREASED VISIBILITY OF YOUTH IN SWA HLMs

The 2019 Sector Ministers' Meeting (SMM) in Costa Rica saw the participation of two youth groups- Pakistan Youth Parliament for Water and Central America Youth for Water Network (Red de Jóvenes por el Agua Centroamérica). Going beyond the High-Level Meetings, SWA created additional avenues for youth voices to be heard in global forums such as Stockholm World Water Week. In 2019, SWA invited a youth panelist for its session on accountability to understand how youth are participating in regional processes and the kind of activities that they are undertaking to hold governments and its development partners accountable in their countries.

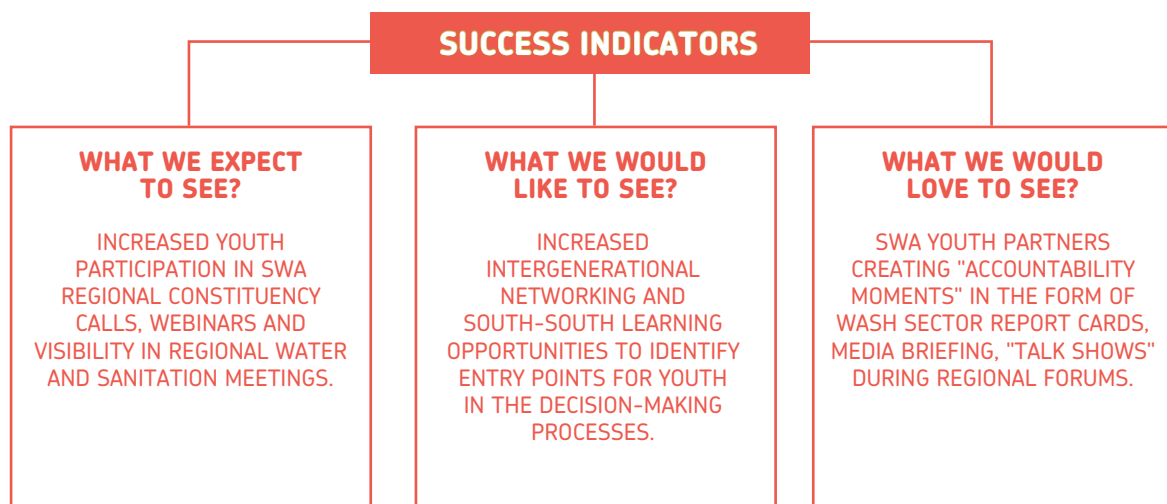


2.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

To increase youth engagement regionally, the SWA partnership could take the following initiatives:

- **Intergenerational Youth Dialogue:** this would be a SWA flagship event at regional level for increasing youth capacity and creating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue in the sector. These events would mostly be virtual. However, if resources permit, SWA will make use of the opportunities provided by regional water and sanitation meetings such as South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN), Latin American Sanitation Conference (LatinoSan) and Africa Water Week to convene such intergenerational dialogue as a face-to-face consultation. In the Intergenerational dialogues, youth advocates/professionals will be paired with senior government officials or sector experts, with whom they could explore and debate the opportunities and challenges of youth engagement and participation in the sector. In these consultations, SWA would also encourage the participants to reflect on how youth could promote accountability.
- **Youth representation in regional forums:** through its partners, SWA will encourage and support youth participation in the regional water and sanitation forums, such as Africa Water Week, LatinoSan, SACOSAN, AFRICASAN.
- **Youth participation in SWA webinars:** these occupy a unique place in the sector as they provide an opportunity to high-level policymakers and members from other constituencies (like CSOs, Private Sector, R&L, U&R and ESAs) to contribute to learning/supporting action on SDG6 and the use of SWA framework. The SWA youth partners (across the constituencies) could become actively involved in these webinars, and whenever possible, present their experiences and case studies on the thematic issues.

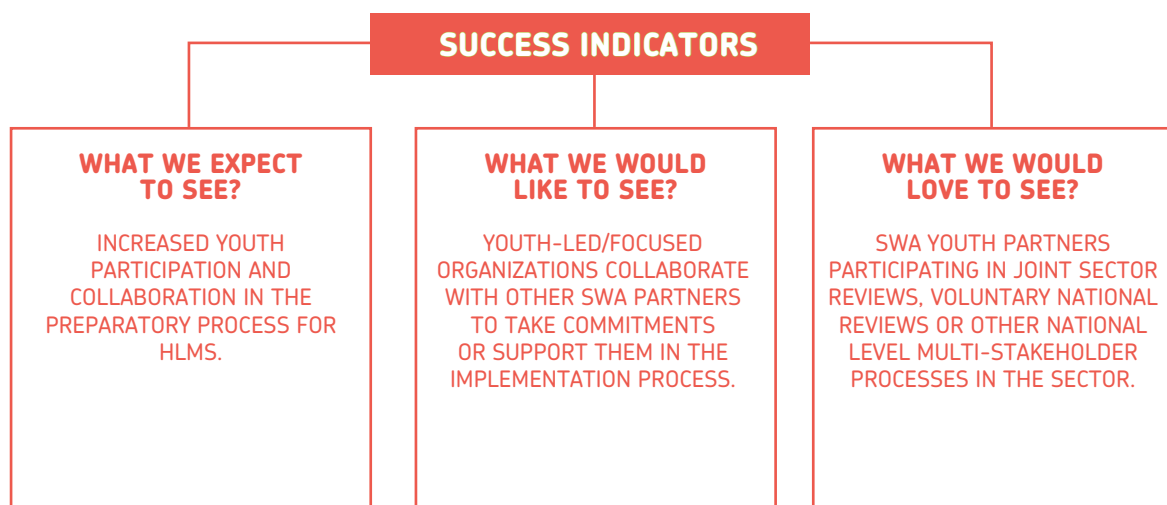


3.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

To increase youth engagement nationally, the SWA partnership could take the following initiatives:

- **Work with SWA focal points:** SWA partnership would encourage the national and district-level youth organizations working on the issues related to water, sanitation and hygiene to collaborate with the SWA focal points, especially with, but not limited to civil society. This networking opportunity could potentially open doors for youth representation in national multistakeholder platforms.
- **Take SWA Commitments:** SWA Secretariat and its partners would work to create an enabling environment so that youth could be involved in the Mutual Accountability Mechanism (MAM) and the preparatory process for the SWA HLMs. SWA Youth partners (both youth-led and youth-focused organizations) have the same responsibilities as any other SWA partner in achieving the SDGs. Therefore, youth networks/organizations can also take commitments to support government commitments.⁽⁵⁾ This could be done in consultation with the constituencies (like CSO's or Private Sector organizations in the country).
- **Participate in National Multi-stakeholder processes:** becoming members of or collaboration with National WASH CSO networks to effectively engage in national accountability processes, such as Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) ⁽⁶⁾, Voluntary National Review (VNRs) ⁽⁷⁾, Universal Periodic Review (UPR).⁽⁸⁾



⁽⁵⁾ To learn more about the MAM commitments process, see [here](#). ⁽⁶⁾ WaterAid has produced a learning synthesis note on [Joint Sector Review](#). ⁽⁷⁾ Refer to Restless Development's [toolkit](#) for youth participation in VNR's. ⁽⁸⁾ Child Rights Connect has produced a factsheet for NGO's which sets out the different stages of the UPR [process](#).

4.

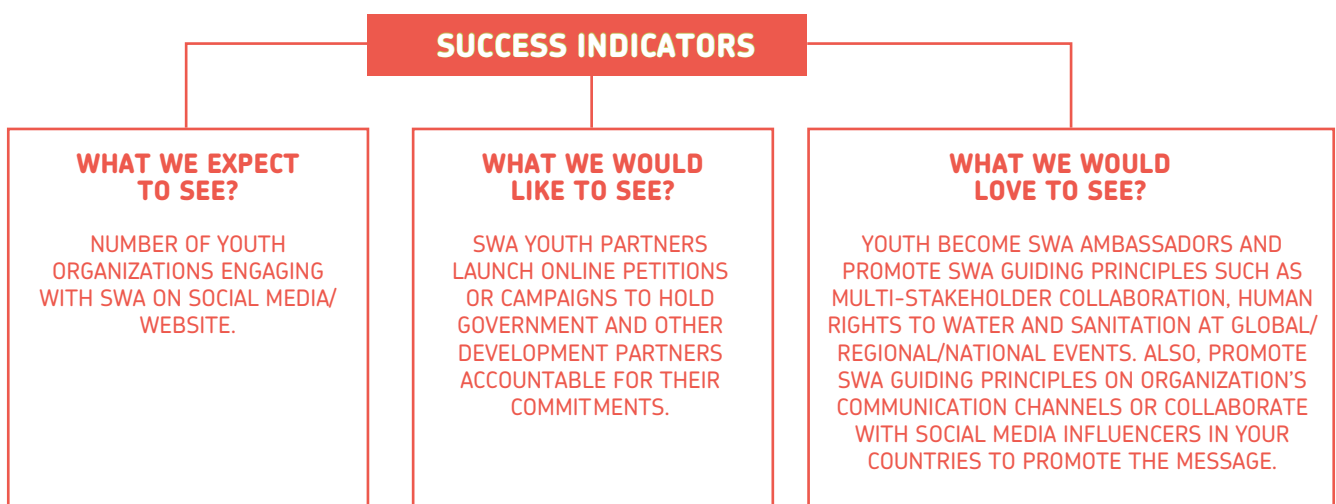
AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF YOUTH THROUGH SWA

Bi-Annual Youth Champion Scholarship: SWA will provide a bi-annual youth champion scholarship. The key objective of this scholarship is to bring and amplify the voice of youth in annual or thematic SWA communication campaigns and processes. Additionally, the SWA Youth Champion will be provided with the opportunity to attend and interview delegates during SWA High-Level Meetings and other key events.

Go Social: as technology is moving the issues at warp speed, young people are utilizing their social networking skills to raise public awareness on key challenges and promote a cross-sector approach to water, sanitation and hygiene issues. To be a negotiator in this space means to be effectively utilizing the participatory and collaborative ethos of social media by building campaigns, creating online petitions to ask for inclusion in national-level multi-stakeholder processes and to hold decision-makers accountable:

- **Video Campaign:** launch a video campaign with SWA youth partners, wherein youth share their stories on how they are advocating or negotiating for change in the sector. This campaign would help disrupt the status quo in thinking of youth not as mere beneficiaries but as guardians of the sector.
- **Create Online campaigns or petitions:** to push for inclusion of youth groups in the national accountability platforms.
- **SWA Twitter Takeover:** to give more visibility to country-level youth activities and campaigns– SWA would allow a youth organization or network to post on SWA twitter account for a day.
- **Inform and involve youth organizations in SWA communications campaigns,** including developing an influencer strategy with the support of SWA Communications team.

Storytelling: SWA communications team will support youth organizations/network to create stories and share their experience of advocacy or innovations in the sector.



MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION



SWA will actively reach out to its partners across constituencies and other organizations to collaborate in implementing this youth strategy. As the Youth Strategy covers all the six constituencies, an SWA Secretariat staff member will lead the advocacy and coordination work on the strategy. This would help ensure the quality of active youth participation and engagement in SWA related activities, better coordination of SWA partners with youth organizations and entrepreneurs at the global and country level. This staff member will work with SWA youth partners to help them implement activities and guide them through the commitments process when necessary.



This document was issued in January 2022.

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)

633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

info@sanitationandwaterforall.org

www.sanitationandwaterforall.org

[#SWAinAction](https://twitter.com/SWAinAction)

