

Sanitation and Water for All

How this global partnership has become a dynamic catalyst for change



Front cover images: Will Boase Photography; WaterAid/Dermot Tatlow/Panos Pictures; WaterAid/Dieter Telemans

Summary

Delivery of clean water and basic sanitation services transforms lives and brings substantial economic benefits. However, water and sanitation services are too often under-prioritised and under-funded, and current global and national investment is frequently insufficient and poorly targeted.

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) – a global partnership of developing countries, donors, multilateral agencies, civil society and other development actors – offers a means to improve aid effectiveness through concerted efforts, acting as a catalyst to overcome barriers to development and national planning in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector. Through three pillars of activity – the biennial High Level Meeting (HLM), the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS), and the National Planning for Results Initiative (NPRI) – SWA augments action to overcome sector challenges, accelerating progress towards universal access.

As founding members of SWA, WaterAid and Tearfund are greatly encouraged by the excellent progress the partnership has already made. SWA now has an opportunity to build on the goodwill and breadth of the partnership to continue strengthening its activities and building on the commitments made to achieve its vision of a world where everyone has sustainable access to sanitation and water.

There is a global sanitation and water crisis...

The world can no longer afford to overlook the global water and sanitation crisis. 783 million people worldwide live without access to clean water and over 2.5 billion people live without adequate sanitation facilities. Globally there are still more than one billion people who practice open defecation¹. This has a vital impact on growth and human development, including economic development, health, education and gender equality.

For example:

- For every \$1 invested in the WASH sector, \$4.30 is returned in terms of saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs of populations². Conversely, the lack of investment in WASH costs African and Asian countries up to 6% of their GDP annually; in sub-Saharan Africa this amount is more than the total amount of aid flowing to the continent each year³.
- Diarrhoeal diseases are the second biggest killer of children under the age of five globally. In contrast, if all those currently unserved were provided with access to safe water and adequate sanitation, the lives of 2.5 million people could be saved⁴.
- 443 million school days are lost each year due to water-related illness⁵.
- Women and girls are disproportionately burdened by inadequate access to water and sanitation; they are often responsible for collecting water, causing them to miss school or income-generating opportunities.

...but barriers continue to hold back progress.

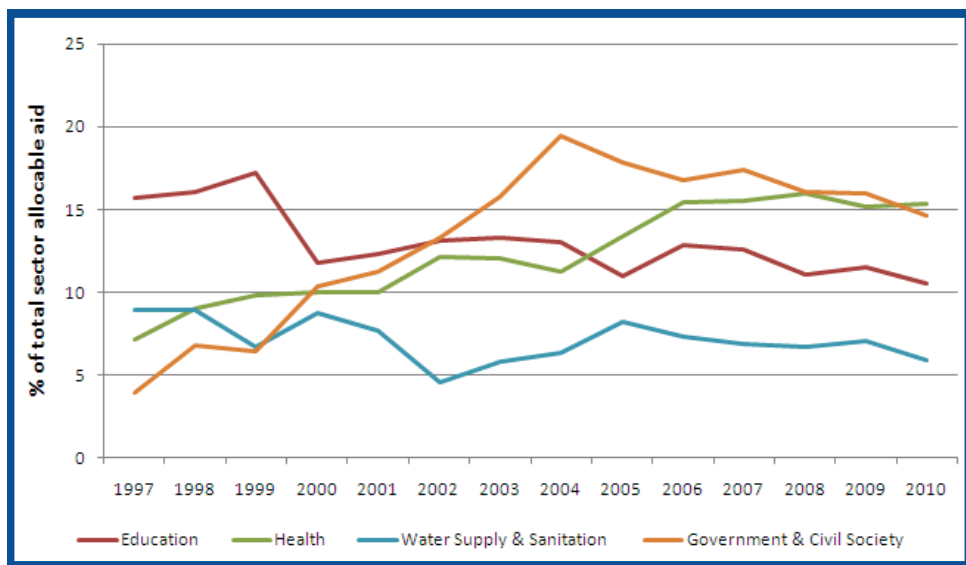
Despite the case for investment, water and sanitation services have suffered from lack of political attention. If current funding and planning trends continue, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG)⁶ for sanitation will not be met in Sub-Saharan Africa for 150 years. Though the MDG target for water has been met globally, it remains off-track in the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and large parts of Oceania, with the poorest communities continuing to fall further behind⁷. Barriers to progress exist at both global and national levels.

Global challenges:

- Global aid flows going to water and sanitation have declined from 9% of the total sector-allocable aid in 1997 to 6% in 2010 (see Figure 1, opposite)⁸.

- Resources are not targeted to the populations or countries in greatest need: only half of the development aid for sanitation and drinking water is targeted to Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and South East Asia, where 70% of the global unserved live⁹.
- WASH sector funding remains highly fragmented, resulting in high transaction costs for donors and governments alike.
- Insufficient resourcing for operation and maintenance has a detrimental impact on the sustainability of services.
- Sanitation remains particularly neglected, with drinking water continuing to absorb the majority of WASH funding.
- There is a lack of predictable finance flows, making it difficult to plan effectively.
- Donor commitments are not always followed through. Over the period 2002-2010, data shows that \$17 billion of the \$54 billion of aid committed to the water and sanitation sector was never released by donors¹⁰.

Figure 1: Social sector spending



Source: (OECD-CRS database)

National challenges:

- WASH funding remains inadequate, with few countries delivering on the eThekweni commitment made by African leaders in 2008 to allocate 0.5% of GDP to sanitation.
- National plans and planning processes are often weak or absent, with poorly defined institutional roles, a weak human resource base, and a lack of processes for local stakeholder participation.
- As a result, the capacity to effectively absorb and utilise funds is low and governments have difficulty spending the limited funds they do receive.
- Many countries lack systems to distribute WASH funding equitably and target the communities most in need.

An exceptional response is therefore needed by national governments and donors in order to overcome these barriers and accelerate progress towards universal access.

SWA works to overcome these barriers

The SWA partnership was launched in 2010. It brings together for the first time developing countries, donors, multilateral agencies, civil society and other development partners to work towards universal access to sanitation and water, through coordinated action at the global and national levels. The SWA partnership is an initiative with high-level support from more than 80 partners, including:

- 38 developing country governments.
- Of these, 12 countries are considered to be fragile states¹¹.
- Eight bilateral donors: Australia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Japan, UK, USA and Switzerland – and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

SWA aims to produce a step change in the performance of the WASH sector through three key areas of activity, by:

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

i) Prioritising political leadership

Every two years, SWA brings together national and global decision-makers at a High Level Meeting (HLM) to focus on key water and sanitation issues.

The HLM serves as a significant catalyst in the following ways:

- **Stimulating greater political will**
The HLM brings together a wide range of global stakeholders including finance, water and sanitation, health ministers from developing countries, and donor government ministers. The meeting provides a global platform for countries and donors to increase ambition in the WASH sector, building momentum and sparking political and financial commitments to improve water and sanitation services.
- **Evaluating progress**
The HLM and its associated processes provide an opportunity for SWA partners to take stock of the performance of the sector and to hold each other accountable for progress against national and international WASH commitments.
- **Providing space for peer to peer learning**
The HLM provides a space for partners to learn from their counterparts, discuss the challenges facing the sector, and lead discussions on ways to overcome the barriers to progress.

Since the inaugural HLM in 2010, the SWA partnership has demonstrated the value of a high-level forum that reviews progress on increasing access to WASH. Commitments tabled at the 2012 HLM will, if delivered, bring access to water and sanitation to 224 million and 307 million people respectively. The meeting also successfully mobilised finance to address deficit areas through commitments to increase both domestic and external budgets¹².

Future HLMs should now build on this achievement: partners should develop a framework of mutual obligations and reciprocity in order to hold each other to account and ensure that the commitments made are implemented. The HLM must also facilitate a more in-depth dialogue between donor and developing country partners to identify and quantify the bottlenecks to effective cooperation in the sector and to propose the policy and financing options capable of bringing about the necessary changes. In this way these meetings can make a valuable contribution towards the SWA's goal of universal access to sanitation and water.

“With the fulfillment of the 2010 HLM commitments, the SWA partnership is showing concrete results on the ground.”

HRH the Prince of Orange, Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB), SWA HLM 2012.

ii) Evidence-based decision-making

SWA seeks to develop a solid evidence base, to provide the necessary analysis for building global and national policy responses. The Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) is a UN-Water initiative, implemented by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, which aims to provide a single authoritative source of comparative information on development and performance in the WASH sector. To identify drivers of change and diagnose structural bottlenecks and

knowledge gaps, the GLAAS report monitors the inputs required to extend and sustain WASH systems and services. These include:

- Government policies and institutional frameworks.
- The volume, sources and targeting of investment to the WASH sector.
- The sufficiency of human resources.
- External support allocations and priorities.

The second GLAAS report was published in 2012, with information from 74 developing countries and 24 bilateral donors, development banks and UN agencies – representing about 90% of official development assistance for WASH. In its relatively short life, the report has earned its place in the water monitoring and reporting landscape and is increasingly used as the basis for more informed decision-making¹³.

Going forward, the added value of GLAAS will be in further strengthening the evidence base to enable better informed policy-making. For example, the GLAAS report should gather more detailed information on donor practices in the WASH sector, to compliment the data gathered on developing country practices. Expanding the GLAAS report to provide information on ‘good donorship’, as outlined in international aid effectiveness principles, will fill a critical gap, and help partners move towards more effective support to the sector.

“I am a strong believer in establishing political priorities based on evidence.”

The Honourable Khampheng Pholsena, Lao PDR, SWA High Level Meeting 2012.

iii) Strengthening national sector frameworks

The third pillar of SWA activity seeks to support the acceleration of WASH coverage in specific countries that lack strong and functioning sector frameworks. Through the National Planning for

Results Initiative (NPRI), SWA aims to support countries that lack the adequate ‘building blocks’ of an effective sector¹⁴, such as:

- Policy/strategy.
- Sector dialogue and coordination.
- Performance monitoring.
- Institutional arrangements.
- Sector finance.

NPRI works through the pooled activities and technical and human resources of SWA partners, providing a coordinated and collaborative multi-stakeholder response to address bottlenecks and foster reform in the WASH sector. In this way NPRI seeks to increase the efficiency of the sector and attract further investment from both domestic and external sources.

NPRI is prioritised in those countries which are off-track for the water and sanitation MDG targets, and where the need for an internationally coordinated response is greatest¹⁵. Engagement is led by national governments, with high-level involvement from ministers representing finance and WASH. During 2011, SWA piloted NPRI in Liberia; the impacts of this are outlined opposite. Further pilots will soon be rolled out.

The SWA partners must support these initiatives by engaging in national level processes and contributing the human resources necessary to support the development of effective sector frameworks. Donor partners must take steps to ensure that developing country partners working to build up capacity and extend coverage are supported with access to finance and technical assistance. Donors must also avoid supporting WASH in fragmented and uncoordinated ways, and ensure that no developing country partners are left ‘donor isolated’.

The Liberia Compact – NPRI in action

Liberia became an SWA partner at the inaugural SWA HLM in 2010 and requested the engagement of SWA partners to help accelerate access to WASH. The backing of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf gave the ensuing SWA Joint Mission the high-level political platform it needed to galvanise action and engage the four ministries involved in the sector, alongside SWA partners, the SWA Secretariat and many of Liberia’s development partners.

During the Joint Mission, four areas were identified as major obstacles to progress: institutional issues; service provision priorities and equity of outcomes; data gaps, monitoring and evaluation; and financing mechanisms.

These obstacles became the focus of the Liberia Compact, a two-year plan which provided a clear focus for all stakeholders in the Liberia WASH sector that was drafted and endorsed as a result of the Joint Mission. The Compact has improved coordination and alignment across the WASH sector in Liberia, increasing the effectiveness of programme implementation, and consequently greatly increasing optimism about the achievability of the Government of Liberia’s vision for the WASH sector. This in turn has increased the willingness of donors to invest.

“Working together [through] the Liberia [Joint Mission] has brought us closer and made us more interdependent, realising the capacity gaps in human resources...In the past, we had donors and partners. Today, we consider ourselves as development partners with a single voice...The SWA process is a catalyst to our current efforts to bring improvements to the sector.”

George Yarngo, Assistant Minister, Public Works, Liberia.

SWA: a partnership for effective development cooperation in the WASH sector

Through the SWA partnership, WASH sector partners work together in a coordinated way, in accordance with international aid effectiveness principles¹⁵.

Country ownership and national government leadership are at the forefront of sustainable sector development. Developing country governments are therefore in the driving seat of SWA, with donors and development partners working in support of nationally-driven sector development.

Alignment: SWA recognises that sustainable results ultimately depend on strengthening country level processes and ensuring that country systems and plans are fully used and endorsed by development partners. SWA supports the alignment of donors behind actionable, transparent and accountable national planning processes through the NPRI.

Harmonisation: Recognising that countries and organisations can achieve more by working together, SWA provides a framework for cooperation, based on mutual trust and support.

Mutual accountability: SWA helps to improve the transparency and accountability of national government and donor investments in WASH, for example by supporting compacts and building national performance monitoring systems. The HLMs encourage SWA partners to review progress towards increasing access to WASH, holding all partners accountable for results achieved and progress made towards agreed reforms.

Managing for results: SWA partners commit to strengthening research, monitoring and evaluation capacity at both national and international levels, in order to enable better planning, monitoring and evidence-based decision-making.

SWA partners must continue to strengthen their commitment to these principles, working together to deliver effective development assistance to the WASH sector.

Why get involved?

The progress of WASH provision is critical to economic growth and is integral to human development, including education, gender equality and health. The SWA partnership provides an opportunity to overcome historical barriers to progress, such as high fragmentation and limited domestic and external commitment, in order to increase the effectiveness of activities in the sector and accelerate progress towards universal access to safe water and sanitation. This potential can only be realised through the active engagement and commitment of SWA partners.

How to get involved

Visit www.sanitationandwaterforall.org for more information.

References

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- ⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006) *Human Development Report 2006. Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*: UNDP: New York, USA.
- ⁶ 189 world leaders committed to meeting eight development targets to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 (the Millennium Development Goals) at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000.
- ⁷ UNDP (2012) Op Cit.
- ⁸ WaterAid (2011) Op Cit, p29.
- ⁹ WHO (2012) *UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS)*: WHO: Geneva, Switzerland.
- ¹⁰ WaterAid (2012) *Addressing the shortfall: The urgent need for increased and better targeted aid to the water and sanitation sector*: WaterAid: London, UK.
- ¹¹ World Bank: *Harmonised List of Fragile Situations FY13*.
- ¹² Chair's Executive Summary, Second Global High Level Meeting: 20 April 2012.
- ¹³ WHO (2012) Op Cit.
- ¹⁴ WaterAid (2009) *'Aid Compacts' built around national plans: How the Global Framework for Action can support country-led processes*: WaterAid: London, UK.
- ¹⁵ SWA is guided by the principles of aid effectiveness as endorsed by the Paris Declaration (2005), Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and recently reaffirmed in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).

“Our ambition...is nothing less than to set out a course of action that will bring an end to the sanitation and water crisis.”

HE John Agyekum Kufuor, SWA HLM 2012



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