

The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) global partnership is pleased to make a submission to the 2017 High-level Political Forum. This submission will focus on the work done by SWA at global and national level.

SWA's main policy recommendations:

1. Governments and other development partners should increase investment in the enabling environment – better institutions, better systems for the delivery, operation and maintenance of water and sanitation services to ensure that no-one is left behind.
2. Countries must develop sustainable sources of financing, and not be dependent on volatile sources of funding that cannot be relied on in the long-term. This may include ensuring that tariffs paid by households are increased in some situations, while respecting the principle of affordability.
3. Invest in improving water and sanitation services levels for those who are poorest, those who are most vulnerable and excluded from mainstream society. The SDGs demand that governments and development partners aim for the best solution for all people, not the perfect solution for a few. This will require targeting investments in rural areas and in informal settlements in urban areas.
4. Governments, development agencies and partnerships should improve accountability mechanisms, including legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks, so that consumers are able to hold service providers and other stakeholders, including government officials, to account for the services that are provided.
5. Ensure monitoring includes the disaggregation of data, so that it is easier for those responsible to tailor solutions to people who lack services.
6. Increase the engagement of all stakeholders in making decisions about issues that affect their lives, recognising that partnership between all relevant stakeholders is central to progress on achieving the SDGs. There are better outcomes when more control is put into the hands of the individuals and groups who are to benefit from any intervention.

What is the Sanitation and Water for All global partnership¹

SWA is a global partnership of over 170 country governments, private sector and civil society organizations, external support agencies, research and learning institutions and other development partners working together to catalyse political leadership and action, improve accountability and use scarce resources more effectively. Partners work towards a common vision of sanitation, hygiene and water for all, always and everywhere.

¹ More information available at: www.sanitationandwaterforall.org

How do water and sanitation contribute to the eradication of poverty and promotion of prosperity?

Water and sanitation are indispensable for the eradication of poverty and promotion of prosperity in this changing world. While the 2017 HLPF does not specifically name SDG 6 on water and sanitation, water and sanitation are central to achieving the SDGs under review and others.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene promotes economic development for the individual, household and society, thus being key to ending poverty (SDG 1). A lack of sanitation alone costs the global economy 222.9 billion USD every year².

Inequalities in access to water and sanitation lead to poorer outcomes for everyone. Better sanitation, safe water and good hygiene practices are crucial to addressing malnutrition and combatting stunting of children (SDG 2). Studies show that poor sanitation is a significant contributor to malnutrition in children³; access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene also contribute to preventing disease (SDG 3) – water-related diseases are among the biggest killers of children under the age of 5, and lead to long-term problems in children’s physical and mental development⁴.

Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene will also reduce the domestic burden on women and girls, allowing them time to relax, work and attend school. It will empower women and girls – who will be able to attend school and/or work, as well as contribute to their dignity⁵ (SDG 5).

Water and sanitation infrastructure promotes innovation and industry (SDG 9), improving the health of the work-force providing essential services for work opportunities.

Preventing pollution of water through better sanitation services, particularly through making sure that wastewater is safely managed and disposed of protects water resources and the life within it, contributing to healthier life below water (SDG 14).

SWA submits the following responses to the issues to be addressed in this report

a) An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of ‘ensuring that no one is left behind’ at the global level

The water and sanitation sector has global monitoring structures, the Joint Monitoring Programme of UNICEF and WHO⁶, and UN-Water’s GLAAS.⁷ These two programmes provide invaluable evidence of how countries are progressing towards universal access to water and sanitation, and which population groups are being left behind, as well as data on how financing is distributed within countries.

2 Lixil, Oxford Economics and WaterAid, The true cost of poor sanitation, 2016, p. 5.

3 UNICEF, WHO, USAID, Improving nutrition outcomes with better water, sanitation and hygiene: practical solutions for policies and programmes p.6, 2015. Available at: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193991/1/9789241565103_eng.pdf

4 https://www.unicef.org/media/media_21423.html

5 www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un_water_policy_brief_2_gender.pdf and <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/getWSDoc.php?id=2428>

6 www.wssinfo.org

7 www.unwater.org/publications/glaas/en/

JMP examines not only national-level outcomes in access to water and sanitation – it also analyses data according to wealth, urban / rural difference and is starting to look at other discrepancies in access, in order to better understand inequalities in access to water and sanitation, such as inequalities in access to services depending on levels of education and language spoken⁸. JMP also collects data on the burden of lack of adequate access to water on women and girl children, who are most likely to be responsible for collecting water for the household, which impacts on gender equality⁹.

UN-Water GLAAS reports document government policy and institutional frameworks; the volume, sources and targeting of investment; the sufficiency of human resources; priorities and gaps with respect to external assistance; and the influence of these factors on access to water and sanitation services¹⁰.

Both JMP and GLAAS provide useful analysis for SWA's partners to help them apply evidence on who is being left behind with respect to access to water and sanitation. This can often be correlated with other markers of poverty, hunger and inequality, as water and sanitation are not only essential for social and economic development, poor sanitation has been shown to be a contributing factor in malnutrition in young children.

b) The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

SWA has consistently focused on closing the funding gap between what is currently being spent on water and sanitation globally by governments and other development partners, and what is required to achieve the SDGs. Forty SWA country partners have identified their financing needs and are at various stages of developing their sector investment plans¹¹.

SWA also advocates for more efficient spending on water and sanitation, identifying the need for more resources (financial and human) to be dedicated to building the right institutions and systems for ensuring universal access to services, and to operation and maintenance to ensure that services are sustainable.

SWA partners work to align efforts made to improve water and sanitation. SWA partners are internalizing the SDGs by undertaking discussions at country level, often with multiple partners, on their SDG baselines and strategic vision; the readiness of their sector systems to catalyse and sustain progress towards the SDGs; and the required financing needed to achieve their ambitions. SWA has contributed to and promoted these discussions in more than 40 countries.

There is also a wide gap in accountability, and the ability for partners (governments, external support agencies, CSOs, private sector and multilateral development Banks) to hold each other accountable for the commitments made through the SDGs.

Almost since its inception, SWA's High-level Meetings¹² have included partners making commitments to achieve specific targets or outcomes, within a two-year timeframe. These

8 Joint Monitoring Programme 2016, Inequalities in sanitation and drinking water in Latin America and the Caribbean.

9 UNICEF and WHO's Joint Monitoring Programme: Progress on sanitation and drinking water, 2015 Update and MDG Assessment, 2015, p.38

10 UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water, GLAAS Report 2017: Financing universal water, sanitation and hygiene under the Sustainable Development Goals.

11 Sanitation and Water for All, Final review of progress made towards the 2014 HLM commitments, SWA 2017.

12 <http://sanitationandwaterforall.org/about/>

commitments firstly lead countries to carefully consider what their priorities are, and then to finding the necessary resources (financial and human) to achieve these. The SWA partnership is currently revising this accountability mechanism to ensure it is effective, relevant and meets the demands of a partnership that is now more inclusive of countries from all income levels. In addition, the revised accountability mechanism is also intended to be aligned with the work of the HLPF and to contribute to it.

SWA also provides a model of a multi-stakeholder partnership, closing the gap that has historically existed in the participation of all stakeholders in decisions made relating to access to water and sanitation services. The political vision of 'leaving no-one behind' provided by the SDGs is proving instrumental to inspire SWA partners to action. This is important not only for the countries with developing economies, but also for industrialized countries, where it is still possible to see that people are being left behind by the globalizing economy, with pockets of poverty increasingly apparent in richer countries.

While SWA partners examine, and act on, these gaps through the lens of water and sanitation, the actions necessary to narrow the gaps are the same for health, hunger and poverty. They include the need to strengthen national systems, such as those that support planning, budgeting, procurement, capacity building and monitoring.

c) Valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity can only happen when investments in water and sanitation reduce, rather than increase the current inequality in access to these services.

SWA donor partners are committed to increasing gender equality in their funding strategies through gender mainstreaming and awareness raising, empowering women and reducing poverty¹³.

Many SWA country partners focus their work on targeting resources and services towards the areas that have been identified as lacking in services, such as rural and peri-urban areas and on methodologies that are most likely to reach people living in poverty, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation approaches.

SDG 6.2 requires countries to eliminate open defecation, which is predominantly practiced by the most vulnerable individuals and groups in any community and within a country. Open defecation is a symptom of poverty – but it also leads to ill-health and malnutrition, particularly in young children, and leads to reduced life chances. Two thirds of SWA country partners, have picked up the challenge to eliminate open defecation by 2030, often as part of a wider poverty reduction strategy¹⁴.

Monitoring of who has access to adequate service levels and who does not can provide valuable information on how to address poverty – as stated above, this is an important aspect of SWA's work.

The SWA partnership has been working with other partnerships, such as 'Every Woman, Every Child', the 'Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement', the 'Zero Hunger Challenge' and the 'Global

¹³ Sanitation and Water for All, Final review of progress made towards the 2014 High-level Meeting commitments, SWA 2017, p. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.10.

Partnership for Education'. These partnerships are all working together to promote multi-sectoral actions with the aim of transforming the health, nutrition, food security, sanitation and education of individuals, communities and nations. Together, the partnerships have launched a 'Partnership Playbook' that outlines common values that can help to realize this aim¹⁵.

d) Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity

Climate change, increasing inequalities, a lack of adequate financing for essential services, as well as more financing going to those who have, rather than to those who have not, and a lack of accountability continue to be the most important issues that will affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity. Increasing financing for essential services for people who have little is key to poverty eradication.

While government allocations and spending for water and sanitation are increasing at an annual rate of 4.9%, this is still insufficient to meet the water and sanitation SDG by 2030¹⁶. Further, while development cooperation disbursements for water and sanitation are also increasing, many of these budgets are uncertain, and not guaranteed over the necessary timeframe¹⁷.

Sanitation and Water for All partners are working towards sustainable water and sanitation services, also in the face of climate change, which is in many countries threatening the availability of water¹⁸.

Economic and social inequalities continue to widen, both between and within countries. This is also the case within the water and sanitation sector, which is why the challenge presented by the SDGs is so important, putting the emphasis on the most vulnerable, on those who have been left behind.

Issues such as climate change and population growth must be addressed through improved planning that takes these realities into account. It will not be sufficient to provide water and sanitation services for the world that we are living in today – we must work to plan the services that will be required in the future, as cities grow, as those living in rural areas continue to lose out through to a lack of investment, making them increasingly unattractive for younger and educated population groups.

Gender equality is a crucial indicator of whether poverty will be eradicated, and prosperity achieved. It has long been recognized that education of girls and women has a direct impact on health and education levels not only of the girls and women themselves, but also of the generation that follows. Access to water and sanitation, and the accompanying good hygiene behaviours, is crucial to achieve this, as is equal participation in decisions around access to water and sanitation. Without easy access to safe water and sanitation, women and girls struggle, as the management of water and sanitation so often falls on their shoulders within the household. Better access to these services improves their ability to engage in the economic

15 Together for the 2030 Agenda: The Partnerships Playbook, Every Woman, Every Child, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the Zero Hunger Challenge, the Global Partnership for Education and Sanitation and Water for All, 2016.

16 UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water, GLAAS Report 2017: Financing universal water, sanitation and hygiene under the sustainable development goals, p.13

17 *ibid.*, p.54

18 https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_4472.html

activity and education, and increases their ability to manage their time as they see fit, and reduces harmful levels of stress.

e) Areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

This submission is based on the experience of working with many countries and development partners. In terms of alignment, the High-Level Political Forum can help to strengthen advocacy for countries to examine the implications of the SDGs for national and sector plans; identify the financing needs and gaps and consequently mobilize financing to achieve their ambitions; foster inter-sectoral discussions; strengthen systems which are necessary to catalyse progress e.g. planning etc.

The high-level political forum could play a crucial role in encouraging countries to look more closely at their water and sanitation legislative and policy frameworks to ensure that they are aligned with the SDG requirement to 'leave no-one behind'.

This political guidance must start with assisting states in understanding the existing levels of poverty, and which population groups are most likely to be living in poverty. Only through understanding who the particular individuals and groups will it be possible to find solutions. People living in remote rural areas will need different support to people with disabilities living in small towns.

Another area that will require political guidance is the construction of effective accountability mechanisms, which will include strong monitoring programmes that provide disaggregated data.

SWA is in a strong position to work together with and contribute to the High-Level Political Forum on follow-up and review of the relevant targets of the SDGs through its mutual accountability processes that are currently under review at SWA.

f) Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication

This submission considers the necessary policy recommendations relating to water and sanitation – but as improved water and sanitation improve social and economic development, they are relevant more generally.

Practices of good governance are essential in order to eliminate poverty and promote prosperity. This is recognized in development effectiveness programming, and is also highlighted in SDG 17 on means of implementation.

At SWA, partners have led multi-country research, and examined successful development practices to identify four Collaborative Behaviours¹⁹ essential for strengthening governments' ability to ensure universal access to water and sanitation services, and by extension, to reduce poverty and promote prosperity.

¹⁹ For more information please see: www.sanitationandwaterforall.org

These four critical changes in practices of government, and of their partners, if adopted by governments and development partners, would bring results in access to water and sanitation and by extension, reduce poverty and promote prosperity.

All SWA partners agree to:

1. Enhance government leadership of sector planning processes
2. Strengthen and use country systems
3. Use one information and mutual accountability platform built around a multi-stakeholder, government-led cycle of planning, monitoring and learning
4. Build sustainable water and sanitation sector financing strategies that incorporate financial data on all 3Ts (taxes, tariffs and transfers), as well as estimates for non-tariff household expenditure

Policy recommendations:

1. Increase investment in the enabling environment – this means better institutions and better systems for the delivery, operation and maintenance of water and sanitation services. This is essential to ensure that no-one is left behind; these essential services have such an important impact on all poverty indicators.
2. Countries must develop sustainable sources of financing, and not be dependent on volatile sources of funding that cannot be relied on in the long-term. This may include ensuring that tariffs paid by households are increased in some situations, while respecting the principle of affordability.
3. Invest in improving services levels for those who are poorest, those who are most vulnerable and excluded from mainstream society. The SDGs demand that we aim for the best solution for all people, not the perfect solution for a few. This will require targeting investments in rural areas and in informal settlements in urban areas, and targeting investment on operation and maintenance of existing services and in education and regulation. In many countries, this will require adapting existing regulations on service provision that currently do not allow for service providers to deliver services to informal settlements.
4. Improve accountability mechanisms, including legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks, so that consumers are able to hold service providers and other stakeholders, including government officials, to account for the services that are provided. This could be achieved through regulation of price or water quality, or through complaints procedures, among other approaches.
5. Ensure monitoring includes the disaggregation of data, so that it is easier for those responsible to tailor solutions to those who lack services.
6. Increase the engagement of all stakeholders in making decisions about issues that affect their lives. Partnership between all relevant stakeholders is central to progress on achieving the SDGs. There are better outcomes when more control is put into the hands of the individuals and groups who are to benefit from any intervention.