

UNICEF's engagement in Sanitation and Water for All

The partnership

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) is a global partnership working to achieve universal and sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water, with an immediate focus on achieving the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals in the countries that are most off-track. Partners include developing countries, donors, development banks, multilateral organizations, civil society, and research and learning institutions, as well as other organizations in the sector. By strengthening political prioritization, improving aid-targeting, addressing critical bottlenecks including weak sector capacity, promoting evidence-based planning and supporting national processes, the SWA partnership aims to increase the impact of resources – both aid flows and government budgetary allocations – and strengthen mutual accountability for achieving results.

As the first and only global high-level political initiative in the sector, SWA has thus far resulted in more than 300 commitments by donors and developing countries to take immediate actions to speed up access to water and sanitation.

The challenge

About 1,900 children die each day from unsafe water, lack of basic sanitation facilities and poor hygiene. Countless others suffer from poor health, diminished productivity and missed opportunities for education. Research indicates that the annual economic impact of poor sanitation is significant – reducing GDP by more than five per cent in some Asian countries.

Domestic and donor resources are not necessarily well targeted to those who need it most. Only about 40 per cent of global water and sanitation aid goes to low-income or least developed countries; and only 16 per cent of all water and sanitation aid flows are targeted at basic drinking water and sanitation systems – which are the systems that tend to meet the needs of the poorest people. The list of the top ten countries, in terms of the highest annual water and sanitation aid received per person unserved, includes only one least developed country.¹

Reporting on MDG progress shows clearly that there are major urban-rural and regional disparities in access to water supply and sanitation, and that sub-Saharan Africa lags significantly behind other regions. According to the analysis provided by the first UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) report, conceived as part of the SWA partnership, this inequity reflects how resources are targeted by donors and developing country governments. Improving the targeting and effectiveness of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) investments is central to achieving equity.

¹ World Health Organization, *UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2010: Targeting resources for better result*, WHO, 2010.



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Background

Sanitation and Water for All grew out of the Global Call to Action on Water and Sanitation launched in 2007 by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The call included proposals for an annual report and a high-level annual meeting to monitor progress in the sector and improve aid-effectiveness. In September 2008, at a UN General Assembly High Level Side Event, the UK and Dutch governments launched Sanitation and Water for All and the partnership was formalized in 2010. Its development has been a truly multi-stakeholder effort, involving UNICEF, DFID, the Netherlands' Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), WHO, UN-Water, the World Bank, WaterAid, End Water Poverty (a coalition of more than 150 NGOs) and others. While WHO was tasked with reporting on investments in the sector, launching the now biennial GLAAS report; UNICEF agreed to convene the High Level Meeting, also now a biennial event, and to host the small SWA Secretariat.

As of July 2012, there were 85 partners: 38 developing countries, nine donors, eight multilaterals, three development banks, four networks of civil society organizations, 10 research and learning institutions, and 13 other organizations with recognized sector expertise and influence. The Honourable John Agyekum Kufuor, former President of Ghana, was named Chair of SWA in November 2011. An elected Steering Committee leads the partnership, actively engaging its members to achieve results around a Framework for Action, which aims to increase the impact of the available resources and strengthen mutual accountability among the partners in three main areas:

- Increasing political prioritization for sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water through activities, such as high-level events, that review progress, catalyze coordinated action, and focus on the impact of access to sanitation and drinking water on economic growth and human development.
- Promoting evidence-based decision-making on sanitation and drinking water by compiling, analyzing and disseminating information.
- Strengthening national government-led planning processes and capacity to plan and guide the development and implementation of sustainable sanitation, drinking water and hygiene services.

UNICEF has played a key role in defining the SWA partnership. UNICEF holds a seat on the Steering Committee, hosts the Secretariat and convenes the High Level Meeting – which brings finance and sector ministers from developing countries together with development cooperation ministers from donor countries.

UNICEF country offices also play a role, by supporting developing countries' participation in the partnership and the High Level Meeting, both within the offices' existing role as the lead in sector coordination and more specifically by providing technical support to their government counterparts. Country Representatives have been actively involved in engaging ministers of finance and relevant WASH sectors.

Activities

Following the first SWA High Level Meeting in 2010, UNICEF convened the second High Level Meeting at the World Bank in April 2012, bringing together more than 180 participants from 67 governments and agencies, including 35 ministers. The meeting, moderated by then-UN Deputy Secretary-General-designate Jan Eliasson and chaired by former President John Agyekum Kufour of Ghana, demonstrated unprecedented political support for water, sanitation and hygiene and resulted in more than 300 specific commitments to take immediate actions to speed up access to water and sanitation.

The momentum gained through this major event will be built upon as partners translate the demonstrated political will into transformational change at the country level, resulting in improved access to sustainable sanitation and water for the world's poorest. The High Level Meeting, in fact, is far more than a meeting: It is part of a broader High Level Meeting dialogue that includes a preparatory process, the three-hour meeting and follow-up. The preparatory discussions are held within and between ministries responsible for water and sanitation and for finance, resulting in the concrete commitments that are presented for consideration at the High Level Meeting.

These discussions are at both the ministerial level, to ensure the political support needed to carry commitments through to implementation, and the senior technical level, to ensure in-depth analysis, coordination and implementation. Progress in implementing the commitments is reported annually by the SWA Secretariat.

Within the SWA framework, partners, including UNICEF, are also developing the National Planning for Results Initiative (NPRI), a mechanism to support planning processes at country level. The NPRI will provide common guidelines and benchmarks for national planning and also coordinate catalytic assistance to SWA partner countries that request it.

Results

While measuring results of the 2012 meeting will take time, SWA partners have reported notable progress since the first meeting in 2010. Eighteen months after that gathering, reported achievements include:

- Nine developing countries have confirmed that they are meeting commitments to increase budget allocations made at the meeting.
- Seven donors have met or exceeded the targets they set for funding.
- Monitoring in seven developing countries and improved data about funding flows from eight donors is strengthening the evidence on which to base good decisions.
- Nine countries report improved coordination and accountability among different institutions and six donors have increased alignment with national planning processes.
- Two countries, Ghana and Liberia, have developed 'compacts' outlining key actions to be taken at the ministerial level to improve sanitation and water. These compacts, which include issues such as the development of detailed investment and capacity-building plans, clarification and strengthening of institutional structures, and monitoring and evaluation systems, are models for other countries to follow.



2012 SWA High Level Meeting, held at the World Bank in Washington DC.

From left to right: Nigeria's Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; UNICEF's Executive Director Anthony Lake; Former Ghanaian President John Agyekum Kufuor (SWA High Level Meeting Chair) and now-UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson (SWA High Level Meeting Moderator)



Hon. John Agyekum Kufuor, SWA Chair



Participating developing countries reported to the SWA Secretariat that the High Level Meeting dialogue in 2010 influenced the progress they were able to make in meeting their commitments.² For almost half of commitments made, they reported, progress was either a direct result of the dialogue around the meeting or was strongly influenced by it. More broadly, the dialogue was reported to have influenced sector progress and catalyzed action at country level. In particular, participants noted that the High Level Meeting dialogue raised awareness and strengthened relations between WASH sector ministries and finance ministries, triggered stronger sector coordination in many countries, created a crucial context for advocacy and encouraged political and financial decision makers to use evidence to improve their decision-making.

The growth of the SWA partnership since its inception has been significant. The second High Level Meeting, in 2012, was twice the size of the first, with 45 developing countries engaged in the preparatory process, up from 20 in 2010. Further, while 61 partners joined following the initial partnership drive, in mid-2010, the current total is 85 partners. Consistent growth is expected, and the target for the number of partners by the end of 2012 is at least 90.

Lessons learned and way forward

The initial years of the partnership have demonstrated that developing countries are willing to make and implement commitments related to WASH. Early results show that donors are shifting the targeting of aid to those most in need. The SWA partners, led by governments themselves, must now convert the demonstrated support and leadership into progress on the ground, a process that UNICEF will support.

The National Planning for Results Initiative represents an opportunity to provide developing countries with concrete assistance on planning processes, and the ongoing success of SWA will depend to some extent on this initiative's progress.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently identified water and sanitation as a key priority for his second term, an announcement that will bring even further visibility, leadership and focus to these issues. Following the successful second High Level Meeting, SWA's partners are reviewing the strengths and weakness of the partnership, setting goals for the next period and looking forward to supporting the Secretary-General's efforts. SWA's monitoring framework and High Level Meeting commitments, in particular, will be revised in light of the key role SWA now plays in the sector.

Leveraging its comparative advantage, including its extensive country presence, UNICEF continues to set an example of good practice in partnership by hosting the SWA Secretariat, convening key stakeholders, facilitating sector dialogue and supporting governments in implementing their commitments.

² Progress Report on the 2010 SWA High Level Meeting Commitments: As summarized by the SWA Secretariat - September 2011.

