

# SWA Partnership Meeting 2015 Report



**SANITATION  
AND WATER  
FOR ALL**

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# Overview

SWA's third partnership meeting had a high level of engagement and participation. The meeting covered a wide range of topics relevant to the current position of the partnership within the global context of the new SDGs. There was a spirit of open and honest dialogue including on some challenging issues. A good mix of new and old participants led to new friendships and connexions, but more importantly an increased focus on participation from countries and opportunities to hear their perspectives.

The positive dialogue between the constituencies led to some innovative ideas. Clear themes emerged, which provided beneficial guidance for the Steering Committee meeting which took place the day after the partners' meeting. These key themes are presented in this short report but in summary they centred around:

1. The fact that the new SDGs provide a fantastic opportunity for SWA. Partners embraced the universal agenda put forward by the SDGs, the focus on inequalities and the potential for greater alignment between local, regional and global processes.
2. Ideas for ways in which partners can implement the new collaborative behaviours of enhancing government leadership; using country systems; mutual accountability platforms and sustainable financing strategies.
3. Increasing accountability for all SWA constituencies not just countries.
4. Continued political prioritization of WASH and mobilization of support at the highest level.

# SWA Partnership Meeting – by the numbers

96

**partners** present at the meeting representing every continent and **38 countries**.

7

**sessions which covered the SDGs**; the new SWA strategy; changing partner behaviours; strengthening SWA accountability; mobilizing political support; a market place of partner ideas and an administrative session.

11

**stalls in the market place** which offered partner ideas for building SWA including topics such as mobilizing country level CSOs; addressing knowledge gaps; menstrual hygiene management; learning from individual countries; ideas from institutions and networks ADB, RWSN, GLAAS, UNC.

30

**panellists and presenters** participated in the sessions representing all SWA constituencies and country regions.

4

**languages** spoken in plenary or group sessions (French, Spanish, Portuguese and English).

57

**individual actions** that participants committed to follow up on after the meeting.



## The SDGs, an opportunity for SWA

Partners noted that unlike the MDGs, where WASH had to fight for recognition, sanitation, water and hygiene flow through the whole of the SDGs and the increased recognition provides an opportunity for SWA to articulate a response on how to tackle all or parts of goal 6. It will also be important to ensure SWA is in close dialogue with other partnerships for other sectors which are focussed on related SDGs. The partners were keen for the Steering Committee to give clear direction on the scope of SWA's focus. At the partnership meeting the majority of participants' preference was for SWA to focus on sanitation, water and hygiene for personal and domestic uses, while increasingly taking into account other aspects included in goal 6 such as water resources and wastewater management. This will mean making an effort to reach out to people and organizations working in these areas, as currently the partnership has few partners with these skill sets. Linked to this was a call for the partnership to strengthen East-West collaboration. For example, China which is a big investor in sanitation, water and hygiene is currently not part of the SWA dialogue.

**It was clear that there is tremendous support from partners for SWA to position itself as a central multi-stakeholder platform for SDG implementation and monitoring.**

The SDGs bring an opportunity for SWA to push forward the discussion on financing to meet the SDGs. Many participants also felt that, to achieve the SDGs, the partnership needs to embrace contributions from different stakeholders, including the private sector. This is not just about engagement with large multi-nationals but also about engaging with smaller businesses too, who have specialized knowledge in discrete geographies. The partners also agreed on the need for increased private sector engagement, but recognized the need to develop clear criteria (the Asks) for private sector participation and what the incentives (the Offers) that would make membership of SWA attractive to the private sector. The accountability of the private sector was also considered critical, for example around issues such as pricing.

The new SWA strategy and the partnership's activities and outputs in the context of the SDGs were discussed in several sessions. Consensus centred around the importance of political leadership, mobilizing finance and focused learning as ways for SWA to achieve something ambitious towards achieving the SDGs.

Participants were clear that SWA should promote a culture of learning, and that learning must become a social norm for this partnership. In terms of the research and learning constituency there was a call for SWA to work closely with academics to change their paradigm in terms of research, to fill the knowledge gaps in countries and to research the factors that will potentially account for success in SDG implementation. The need for more partners from countries in the South to join the R&L constituency was recognized. The R&L constituency also agreed that there is a need to be more explicit about where we have sufficient knowledge to inform decision making, and where there are gaps, and this links to the R&L's plans to drive a global research agenda.





# Changing SWA Behaviours

The four new collaborative behaviours identified by partners, in which developing countries and their development partners can improve the way that they work together to achieve greater development effectiveness, were discussed in detail by countries and by different constituencies.



The feedback is that many countries and constituencies would like specific guidelines on how to implement the behaviours. The different constituencies felt they should customize and take on responsibility for their own behaviour change but with some overarching guidance. An idea was put forward for SWA to develop a performance index for all constituencies based on behaviours to measure progress and for accountability in order to track progress towards collaborative behaviour change. The idea would be for sector partners to sign agreements with implementing partners and both should have to report back against these behaviours.

Under the specific behaviour of **financing strategies**, there was some consensus that one of the key challenges faced is the limited domestic budgetary allocation going to the WASH sector. Funds allocation often ignores sector priorities. Most governments are attempting to adopt the sector wide approach to move away from project funding. However, development partners are still sometimes sceptical of government-led financial systems and procurement systems.

Under the behaviour of enhancing **leadership** of processes, partners put forward the idea that countries need assigned lead ministries for WASH rather than fragmentation with multiple ministries having responsibility. Some felt that strong leadership in the sector at national level does not mean strong leadership at local level – responsibilities are delegated to municipalities but they don't have the capacity to lead/coordinate the sector. It was also suggested that it is important that national governments are convinced of the value of the behaviours for strengthening their own country systems.

Another issue that was raised was that too much of the service delivery by CSOs/INGOs takes place through projects rather than going through country systems. When project funding runs out, the NGO will withdraw from the area and hence won't be carrying out post-implementation monitoring (this is not the case with local CSOs based within the communities). Governments do carry out this post-implementation monitoring but cannot do this effectively without knowing what NGOs are actually doing in the country – what they have built, how much they have invested and what needs to be monitored.

**SWA can also have a role to play – through the R& L constituency – to hold donors, countries and NGOs accountable for working in a way that is intellectually robust.**

# Accountability

The discussion on accountability began with a review about what accountability is founded on. The principles of accountability are collecting and making information available, ensuring understanding, engagement and a response. When reflecting on the role of accountability, partners felt that all constituencies needed to be more accountable for the collaborative behaviours SWA is trying to foster in countries and therefore SWA should explore the mechanism for accountability and the idea of a performance index. Linked to this, was the issue and importance of citizen generated data, and the role of CSOs in accountability.

The ideas put forward focused on the need for 'people powered' accountability mechanisms at the country level. Governance and transparency are becoming more important as values we should maintain and so partners were explicit about the need to be able to hold duty bearers to account. At the other end, partners reminded the group that SWA should avoid focusing only on the national level and forgetting the importance of the regional level for accountability. For example, the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) is key in Africa.







## Political prioritization

Partners unequivocally pointed out that political mobilization needs to be linked to the collaborative behaviours, accountability and strengthening country processes. One way to bring these linkages together is to identify champions to promote change in the collaborative behaviours in all countries and constituencies. This can be done by country partners developing clear advocacy plans. Others felt that SWA should increase its engagement with all the regional political bodies, especially in the build up to the Ministerial Meeting scheduled for March 2016 which provides a major opportunity for political dialogue.

Partners also felt that SWA could become more active in a rights based approach to water and sanitation, especially in the light of the fact that in many countries there are court cases to claim rights to water and sanitation. However, it is important that SWA has a clear advocacy plan of how to mobilize support and this must involve civil society as well. The focus must be on a reduction in inequalities, putting the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable first.

Partners reflected on how SWA can mobilize / enhance political processes. A number of processes already exist and it is important that we do not give a perception of starting new processes but should build on what exists. It is important that country and regional political leadership should be alert to see SWA as an opportunity to support them. Some of the CSOs are responding to this challenge: for example, there is a South Asia CSO meeting in November 2015 which will bring together key leaders and sector partners. This meeting will be used for a critical review of the WASH situation. Another suggestion would be for SWA to work through parliaments to influence ministries and target relevant commissions within parliament. It is important for Ministers to see what is in it for them and for their country.



# Looking forward

Partners put forward ideas of how to prepare for the Ministerial Meeting to be held in March 2016. Among the ideas put forward were the following:

- Position SWA as a crucial platform within the wider water & sanitation sector.
- Ensure support to countries to allow them to better prepare for SWA meetings, so as to make sure they come with recommendations.
- Leverage regional communities and platforms in all continents to take the SWA agenda to the highest levels e.g. ask AMCOW President (Senegal's President) to hold a meeting within the AU meeting.
- Consult with partners prior to meetings, so as to ensure that discussion themes are relevant and of interest.
- Public private coalitions are crucial – show how we can bring together expertise from different constituencies to deliver WASH at scale including consulting the private sector at country level.



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