

ABOUT THE SWA QUARTERLY NOTES – PART OF THE SOLUTION

These Notes are short pieces to highlight issues of strategic importance for water, sanitation and hygiene, to advance the discussion on specific solutions to the issues, and situate SWA within the progress being made. These notes are meant for SWA's institutional partners, the overall SWA partnership, the SWA Secretariat and, more broadly, the WASH sector. In each Note, the conceptual considerations will be illustrated by testimonials from across SWA partner countries.

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QUARTERLY NOTE

A SYMPHONY NEEDS AN ORCHESTRA

Linking multistakeholder
approaches to a more
effective sector and more
concerted efforts

Introduction

The multistakeholder approach is SWA's *façon d'être* – SWA symbolizes, promotes, celebrates, supports, organizes and works with multistakeholder processes and platforms at all levels, global, regional, national, provincial and local. First among SWA's [Guiding Principles](#), which bind all partners together and form the basis of all activities and initiatives, is that “all stakeholders have relevant and complementary contributions to make to help realize the visions of the sector and [achieves the SDGs](#).” The multistakeholder approach is also central to several [Collaborative Behaviours](#), notably that **sector development requires a government-led, multi-stakeholder cycle** of planning, monitoring, and learning. The SWA Strategic Framework 2020 – 2030 reflects the centrality of the multistakeholder approach for SWA – one of SWA's Strategic Objectives is to “Champion multistakeholder approaches towards achieving universal access to services”.

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The term “*Multistakeholder initiatives*” encompasses multistakeholder actions, collaboration, processes, platforms, partnerships, forums, and dialogues. These are characterised by – participation of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, opening civic spaces for civil society and others, focus on the articulation and proactive resolution of common concerns, encouragement of partnerships among different sectors, and ongoing process of collective learning and problem solvingⁱ.

Understanding Multistakeholder initiatives

Multistakeholder partnerships have been designated as “**the collaboration paradigm of the 21st century**” needed to solve the increasingly complex challenges that exceed the capabilities of any single sectorⁱⁱ, at all levels of action (from the global to the most local). They have the potential to address a number of gaps: (i) become sources for rule-setting where regulatory gaps need to be filled; (ii) address different forms of governance issues when individual stakeholders are unable unilaterally to achieve desired objectives, especially when it comes to complex metaproblems such as development, poverty, and protection of the environment; (iii) overcome a participation gap, meaning that all parties relevant to a specific issue have a say; (iv) include competing stakeholder demands by visibly set priorities between these demands; and (v) enable knowledge transfer between actors and create new knowledge that none of the collaborators previously possessed.

Multistakeholder initiatives in development have been observed since the 1990sⁱⁱⁱ, but *picked up pace with the sustainable development agenda*^{iv}. Multistakeholder initiatives are **closely linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**^v – they are proposed as a mechanism to support and encourage partnerships, and to provide leadership on successful partnerships for achieving the SDGs. Moreover, the critical role of



the SDGs. Moreover, the critical role of partnerships is emphasised further by the fact that one of the SDGs themselves (SDG 17) focuses exclusively on partnerships, calling for 'a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development', which should be 'complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries and in particular developing countries'.

Multistakeholder initiatives serve three direct, interrelated purposes, each of which is served using six major actions

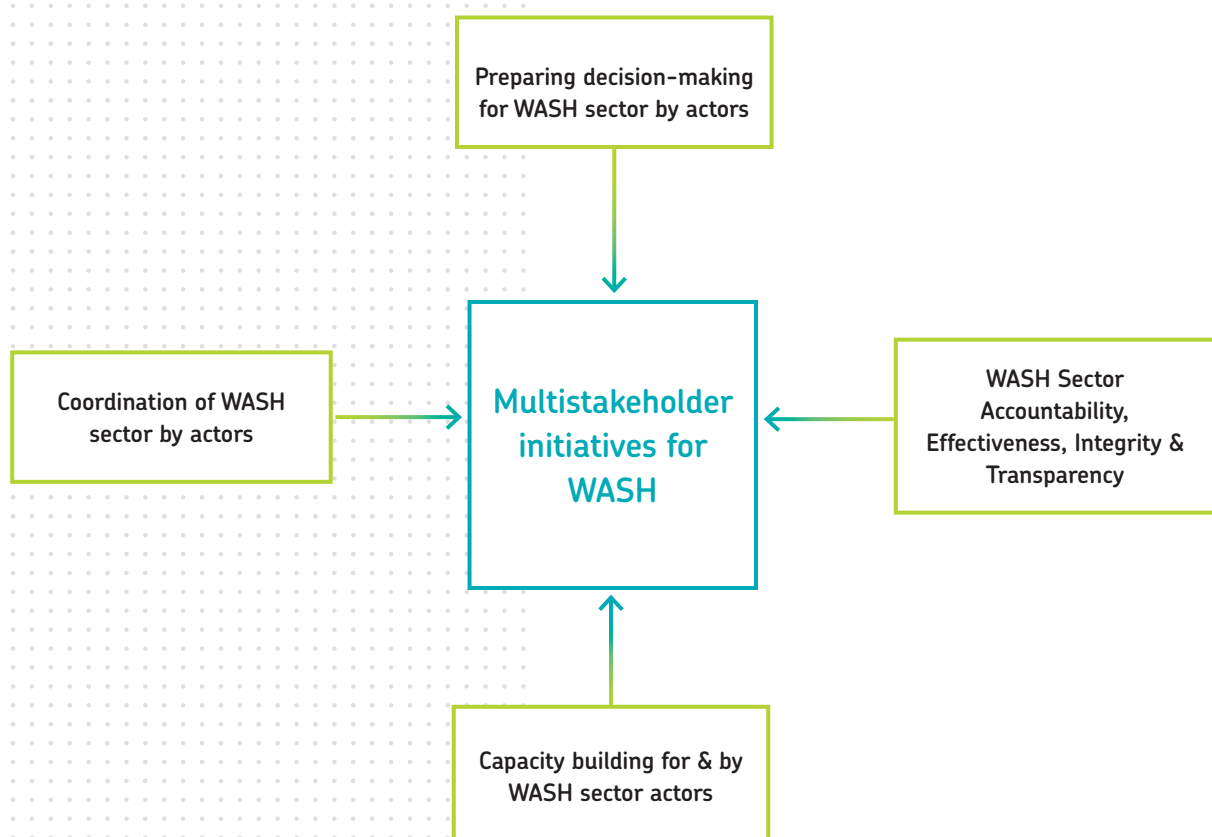
- Preparing decision-making for the sector by stakeholders through (i) Identification and analysis of issues; (ii) Negotiation and trade-offs; (iii) Alignment of positions; (iv) Setting of goals; (v) Attribution of roles and

responsibilities; and (vi) Allocation of resources.

- Coordination of the sector, through (i) Identification of resources available in the sector; (ii) Identification of resource gaps in the sector; (iii) Mapping of actors and actions of the sector, including focal points and resource persons; (iv) Sharing of actors' engagement plans; (v) Sector review mechanisms; and (vi) Accountability via goal-setting.

- Capacity-building of stakeholders, through (i) Sharing of information, knowledge and experiences; (ii) Expression of capacity needs; (iii) Identification and mobilisation of resources; (iv) Creation and maintenance of networks; (v) Documentation and dissemination of resources for capacity-building; (vi) Creation and maintenance of WASH institutional memory.

(At the national level, these three purposes are served through multistakeholder initiatives established and implemented under strong government leadership).





Multistakeholder initiatives in the WASH sector too are benefiting from increasing attention from the research community

Moreover, multistakeholder processes and platforms are directly related to the [accountability](#), effectiveness, [integrity](#) & transparency of the WASH sector. Initiatives become **even more crucial as we look at WASH's links with other sectors and cross-sectoral issues** – [climate](#), responding to [COVID-19](#) and [building forward better post-crisis](#), [inequalities](#), [health](#) (includes nutrition), [peace](#) and [education](#).

Evidence base for Multistakeholder initiatives

The proliferation of **multistakeholder initiatives in international development** has been accompanied by increase in the reporting and assessments of these initiatives. Broadly positive assessments have been reported of specific interventions involving national multistakeholder partnerships, from Benin (uptake of agricultural innovations) to Canada (implementation of community sustainability plans), and from India (community management of acute malnutrition and tobacco control) to South Africa (partnerships for achieving SDGs).

Multistakeholder initiatives in the WASH sector have been subject to analysis, the first one being the study of two multistakeholder initiatives in WASH in 2006 (Partnership for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) and European Union Water Initiative (EUWI)). Since then, research has looked into use of MSPs in conflict resolution around integrated water management, wastewater treatment and aquifers in Iran, water supply systems in post-Tsunami reconstruction in Sri Lanka, assessment of vulnerability of cities to flooding and extreme precipitation in Spain, and water security in Ethiopia. The extent of multistakeholder initiatives in the WASH-climate nexus was reported through a wide study in 2019 – 21% of the total portfolio of 2517 national-level partnerships address one or more goals of the nexus of WASH, health, and climate change; while



only 16.6% address two or three goals of the nexus. These partnerships also tend to be concentrated in specific regions of strategic, geopolitical, or other interest to partners and donors.

To sum up, the **evidence on the utility and effectiveness of multistakeholder initiatives is significant and broadly positive.**

Multi-stakeholder partnerships offer a mode to mobilize the diverse range of stakeholders needed to address sustainable development challenges, be these challenges local or global. Multistakeholder initiatives are **particularly important for sustainability**. This has been amply illustrated, for example, at the nexus of climate and sustainable development, and across the water-energy-food nexus. However, for such partnerships to work, they must avoid reproducing traditional, unequal and ineffective models of bi/multilateral development.

Testimonials – Multistakeholder initiatives in WASH and impact on SDG6



SWA's links with multistakeholder initiatives are shown in the figure. SWA **symbolizes** such partnerships, being itself composed of 6 constituencies, including the new [Utilities & Regulators](#) and focusing increasingly on new categories of actors such as parliamentarians and direct engagement with Ministers in forums going beyond the High-Level Meetings. The [Global Leadership Council](#) is a team of the highest level of decision-making and is itself multistakeholder. SWA's institutional partners actively support SWA's role in multistakeholder processes ([USAID](#) and [WaterAid](#), for example). SWA **promotes** multistakeholder approaches at all levels, including the global (the World Water Forum and the [UN General](#)

[Assembly](#)) and the national (for example, during the leadership visits to [Peru and Colombia](#) in 2019 and [Mali](#) in 2020). SWA **celebrates** multistakeholder approaches of its partners, highlighting, for instance, [Ethiopia's](#) ONEWASH Programme which was showcased during the 2016 SWA High-level Meeting and [Vietnam's](#) efforts in to use MSPs to address inequalities.

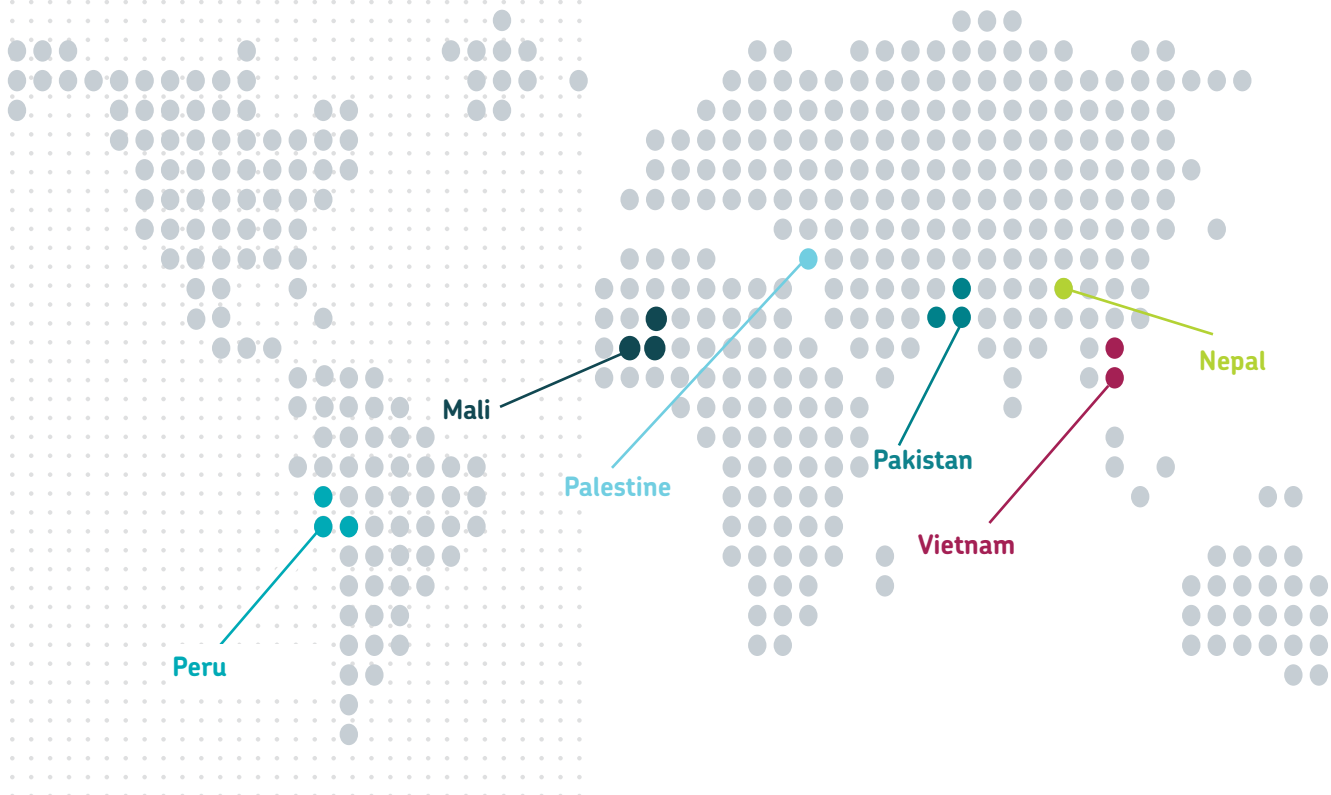
Moreover, SWA **supports** multistakeholder efforts – the [HLMs](#) aim to spark and strengthen MSPs in countries, notably via the preparatory and follow-up processes ([2017](#), [2019](#)). This is perhaps most evident in the increasingly robust preparations for the HLMs and SWA's support to these preparations,



SWA HELPS ESTABLISH AND WORKS WITH MULTISTAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS IN COUNTRIES

such as in [Zambia](#) in 2018, [Mali](#), [Nigeria](#) in 2019 and [Bangladesh](#) in 2020; SWA also provides space for other stakeholders to join the WASH dialogue at international level through constituency delegations in all HLMs, while providing space for [Private sector](#) and [CSO](#) to express their positions, especially in the run-up to High-level Meetings. SWA has supported the participation of [Civil society organizations SOs in regional forums](#) (2019), as well as through [communications activities](#) for global meetings. SWA also **organizes** multistakeholder initiatives – for instance, all High-Level meetings since 2016 necessarily include multistakeholder representation. Besides these high-level meetings, SWA provides avenues for multistakeholder dialogues through the Partnership Exchange [Forum](#) in 2020, the country visits, the ministerial webinars and Ministerial Roundtables in response to COVID-19. Finally, SWA helps establish and **works with** multistakeholder platforms in countries – SWA committee in [Mali](#) and SWA task force in [Malawi](#) are reflections of the macrocosm that is the multistakeholder nature of SWA at international level, and illustrations of the support SWA provides to multistakeholder collaboration at country level.

To illustrate the presence and effectiveness of national multistakeholder initiatives, we collected testimonials from SWA partner countries across the globe, paying special attention to **perspectives from all the major stakeholders of the sector** – government, bilateral donor, international financial institution, civil society organization, research institution and private sector organization. The testimonials in this Note are about country-level multistakeholder initiatives as ways to a more effective sector and more concerted efforts, and SWA's roles in these initiatives.



Mali^{vi}

Mali's WASH sector includes several multis-takeholder processes, including the annual Joint Sector Review, the National water council, and the Interministerial WASH coordination committee, and bilateral dialogues. The annual National Consultation of WASH Actors is being organized in Mali for the past several years and brings together all relevant stakeholders, including local collectivities.

This Consultation generally takes place before the JSR. One of the key commitments agreed upon and tabled during the 2019 Consultation was to organize a National dialogue on WASH financing. This commitment was formalized as a national commitment on the SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism – moreover, SWA contributed to the Dialogue on financing by providing support in the preparation (eg. defining the ambit of the Dialogue), expertise (via intervention by domain experts from the SWA Secretariat) and resources (via the Finance Ministers' Handbook on WASH financing).

“THIS CONSULTATION CONTRIBUTES TO SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES, ALL ENCAPSULATED IN THE AIDE MÉMOIRE. THERE IS A GREATER INTEREST IN THIS CONSULTATION FROM PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYERS AND A GREATER AND MORE CONSTANT COMMITMENT FROM DONORS”

In March 2020, the CEO of SWA [visited Mali](#), where she interacted with – and advocated to – all important stakeholders, including the parliamentary WASH network and the major donors who are present in the country but not active in the WASH sector. This visit provided visibility and advocacy for the ongoing multistakeholder processes in Mali – moreover, the visit itself was strongly multistakeholder in nature.



Nepal^{vii}

Nepal's **National Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee** brings together all the major partners in the WASH sector in Nepal, from the national to the most local levels. It was set up with the goal of ending open defecation in the country. Its role is to decide on processes and guidelines, which are then implemented by the partners including the local governments with their own funds. The platform plays the role of coordinating the sector (eg. clarify stakeholder roles and avoid overlapping and duplicated efforts, coordinated and participatory monitoring) while fostering the spirit of working together, ownership of the goal by all stakeholders and recognizing and rewarding contributions and successes.

Thanks to the government's commitment made under SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism and SACOSAN and also due to its own national priority, achievement of national ODF has become possible. Now, the Committee is working on a 'Total Sanitation' concept with various aspects of WASH in rural and urban areas. This will accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

“IF THIS PLATFORM HAD NOT EXISTED, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF OPEN DEFECATION FREE NEPAL WITHIN THE GIVEN TIME PERIOD. THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN CONFUSIONS AND CONFLICTS WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF ‘GOAL’ PUSHED FURTHER AWAY”

“THE PLATFORM FACILITATED THE FORMULATION OF WASH DEVELOPMENT PLANS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL, AND REPORTS ON THE SACOSAN, SWA AND THE SDGS, WHILE ALSO BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF THE SECTOR ACTORS IN CONDUCTING JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS”

Pakistan^{viii}

The **WASH Sector Partner Coordination is led by the WASH Strategic Unit** within the Ministry of Climate Change, and allows interaction and collaboration between sector actors and government bodies. The Unit facilitated the implementation of Clean Green Pakistan and National WASH reforms agenda along with reporting on national, regional and international commitments.

The SWA partnership has helped the sector stakeholders in Pakistan to remain engaged in a structured high-level political dialogue with an accountability framework in the form of self-made commitments for progress on WASH agenda.

Another illustration of the link between multistakeholder platforms and mutual accountability is the way [Pakistan's](#) stakeholders have formulated and monitored commitments using a 'bottom-up' approach of localized multistakeholder platforms. Moreover, the **WatSan Cell in the province** of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was established by the provincial government to provide water and sanitation related services. It communicates and interacts with all WASH stakeholders to consolidate the data and



coordinate all the efforts across the province. It has provided training Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning to the technical staff of the province's vulnerable TMA's (Town Municipal Administration) while also organizing virtual events on hand hygiene and menstrual hygiene management. This platform illustrates the implementation of **multistakeholder initiatives at the local level.**

Palestine^{ix}

In Palestine, the **Water Sector work Group** is a coordination mechanism for the donors working in the water sector, while the WASH Cluster coordination Platform coordinates with Humanitarian actors. Both platforms are characterized by a strong presence of government actors.

“WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED USING THIS MULTISTAKEHOLDER PLATFORM? COORDINATION ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND NEEDS AND PRIORITIZATION OF THE PROJECTS AND TARGET AREAS, ALLOWING TO AVOID DUPLICATION IN CERTAIN AREAS AND TO REACH THE MOST VULNERABLE. WITHOUT THE WASH CLUSTER, THERE WOULD BE A TOTAL LACK OF HUMANITARIAN FUNDING TO THE WASH SECTOR IN THE COUNTRY”

“PARTNERS HAVE SHARED THEIR APPRECIATION FOR THIS UNIQUE APPROACH. DUE TO THE PARTICIPATION OF HIGH-LEVEL DECISION MAKERS, INCLUDING THOSE FROM VARIOUS MINISTRIES AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS, TOPICS ON THE AGENDA ARE NOT LIMITED TO WATER, BUT INCLUDE A RANGE OF ISSUES”

Perú^x

The 2030 Water Resources Group (2030 WRG) is a public, private, multi-donor trust fund hosted by the World Bank Group. It supports stakeholders in collective decision making, and in co-designing solutions across all sectors connected to water (water and sanitation services, water resources and, most recently, climate action). It is also a project funding mechanism in some countries. The 2030 **Water Resources Group multi-stakeholder platform** in Peru has helped build cross-sectoral relationships and facilitates dialogue among the diverse set of key stakeholders. It has enabled stakeholder consultations on topics like water governance policy, regulations, private sector action, water stewardship efforts and social impact, and community participation.

The SWA CEO [visited Peru](#) in September 2019, meeting all crucial stakeholders in the country, including an interministerial meeting and an inter-donor roundtable. As in Mali, this visit highlighted the need for sector platforms to have stronger representation from all constituencies and for the platforms to be more resilient during changes of government. This advocacy from the SWA leadership paved the way for the WRG to include civil society organizations – subsequently, the WRG met with leading civil society actors and efforts are now afoot to invite the most relevant civil society to join the WRG.



“OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS, THE SANITATION WORKING GROUP IN VIETNAM HAS MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION 2000-2020, THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE NATIONAL TARGET PROGRAM FOR RWSS AND THE NATIONAL TARGET PROGRAM ON NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT, THROUGH JOINT COORDINATION OF SECTOR ACTIVITIES, MOBILIZING INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES, SHARING INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES AND SCALING UP RURAL SANITATION INITIATIVES”

Vietnam^{xi}

In VietNam, the National Sanitation Working Group (SWG) is one of the crucial multis-takeholder platforms in the WASH sector. Dedicated specifically to sanitation, and established with a view to make up for the poor visibility and priority that this sub-sector typically receives, the SWG brings to the table several Ministries, donors for WASH sector, research and education and private sector. It is funded by UNICEF, and its overall aim is to promote sanitation and hygiene in poli-

cies, initiatives, innovation, programmes and interventions. Established in 2009, the SWG is a platform for policy dialogues, sharing information and lesson learned on rural sanitation and hygiene promotion; it also helps mobilize resources for promoting sanitation and hygiene from stakeholders and international communities.

Many sanitation initiatives and water supply programmes have been introduced, implemented and shared in this platform. Viet Nam used this same platform to prepare and hold dialogues on the SWA commitments in 2019. As a result of that process, government tabled 3 commitments which are supported by partners across different constituencies including civil society and external support agencies. Many related technical issues for example low-cost latrine options for poor and remote areas have been introduced and researched. Climate WASH resilience and other solution for WASH in emergencies have also been mobilized through this platform. The SWA Framework, and promotion of government-led Multistakeholder platforms, are very appropriate to the Sanitation Working Group and help the group work together closely towards the country's WASH targets. Efforts are underway to perennialize the funding for this Group and to increase involvement of the private sector.



i di San Giorgio, Business, Peace and Sustainable Development, 2016

ii Pinkse and Kolk, Business & Society 51(1) 176–210, 2012

iii Pattberg and Widerberg, Ambio, 2015

iv MacDonald, Clarke and Huang, Journal of Business Ethics, 2018

v Banerjee, Murphy and Walsh; Sustainability, 2020

vi Testimonial provided by **bilateral donor** – Nadine DULAC, Experte Environnement & Changements Climatiques-Appui au Renforcement des Capacités, Agence belge de développement

vii Testimonial provided by **civil society** – Lajana Manandhar, Director, Freshwater Action Network South Asia

viii Testimonials provided by **research organization** – Saima Ashraf, CEO, Able Plus Research Center (ApRec); and Private sector organization – Niaz Ullah Khan, CEO, AWF (Assessment with Facilitation) Pvt. Ltd.

ix Testimonial provided by **government** organization – Majeda Alawneh, National WASH Director, Palestinian Water Authority

x Testimonial provided by **international financial institution** – César Fonseca, 2030 Water Resources Group LAC Coordination, World Bank

xi Testimonial provided by **government** organization – Do Manh Cuong, Vietnam Health Environment Management Agency (VIHEMA), Ministry of Health

