

**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

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Linking high-level
advocacy to
changes on the
ground

Introduction

High-level advocacy in favour of water and sanitation is one of the key tenets and *raisons d'être* of SWA. This is mirrored in the broader development space, where advocacy has become one of the strongest mechanisms for affecting change.

“Advocacy for development is a combination of social actions designed to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance and systems support for a particular goal or programme. It involves collecting and structuring information into a persuasive case; communicating the case to decision-makers and other potential supporters, including the public, through various interpersonal and media channels; and stimulating actions by social institutions, stakeholders

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ADVOCACY CAN PRODUCE THREE TYPES OF OUTCOMES: DIRECT BENEFITS, DISTRIBUTIVE CHANGES & SYSTEMIC EFFECTS

ADVOCACY IS EMBEDDED IN THE SWA'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: "SWA IS A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP OF GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR PARTNERS. THROUGH ITS CONVENING POWER, PARTNERS GALVANIZE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, AND ADVOCATE FOR COORDINATED ACTION ON WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE."

1 World Health Organization; Advocacy Strategies for Health and Development: Development Communication in Action – A Background Paper to the Inter-Agency Meeting on Advocacy Strategies for Health and Development: Development Communication in Action, Geneva, 9–13 November 1992

2 "Disease Politics and Medical Research Funding: Three Ways Advocacy Shapes Policy" by R. K. Best (in *American Sociological Review*, 2012) is perhaps the strongest study of the effects of advocacy – it used data on 53 diseases over a period of 19 years. The area of climate similarly benefits from strong studies – for instance, see "Policy Advocacy Organizations: A Framework Linking Theory and Practice" by Gen and Wright, in *Journal of Policy Practice*, 2013; or M. A. M. Hanegraaff's solid Transnational Advocacy over Time: Business and NGO Mobilization at UN Climate Summits" in *Global Environment Politics*, 2015.

and policy-makers in support of the goal or programme." ¹ Advocacy continues to evolve and now includes work undertaken by development agencies, civil society groups, and individuals to bring about positive change. This includes raising awareness at the grassroots level and with key influencers, creation or reformation of policies, and encouraging the effective implementation of those policies.

The evidence base for advocacy

Analyses of advocacy are as numerous as the definitions themselves of the word 'advocacy'. There is a big corpus of literature that has analysed the modes, models, roles and impact of advocacy in different social sectors; as well as specific aspects like lobbying, coalitions and transnational organisations, citizen participation and grassroots advocacy, academic advocacy, celebrity campaigning, activism, legal advocacy and virtual/online advocacy. From these analyses has emerged a solid conceptual and theoretical understanding of advocacy. Several organisations have also developed methodological tools for effective advocacy on topics of interest to them.

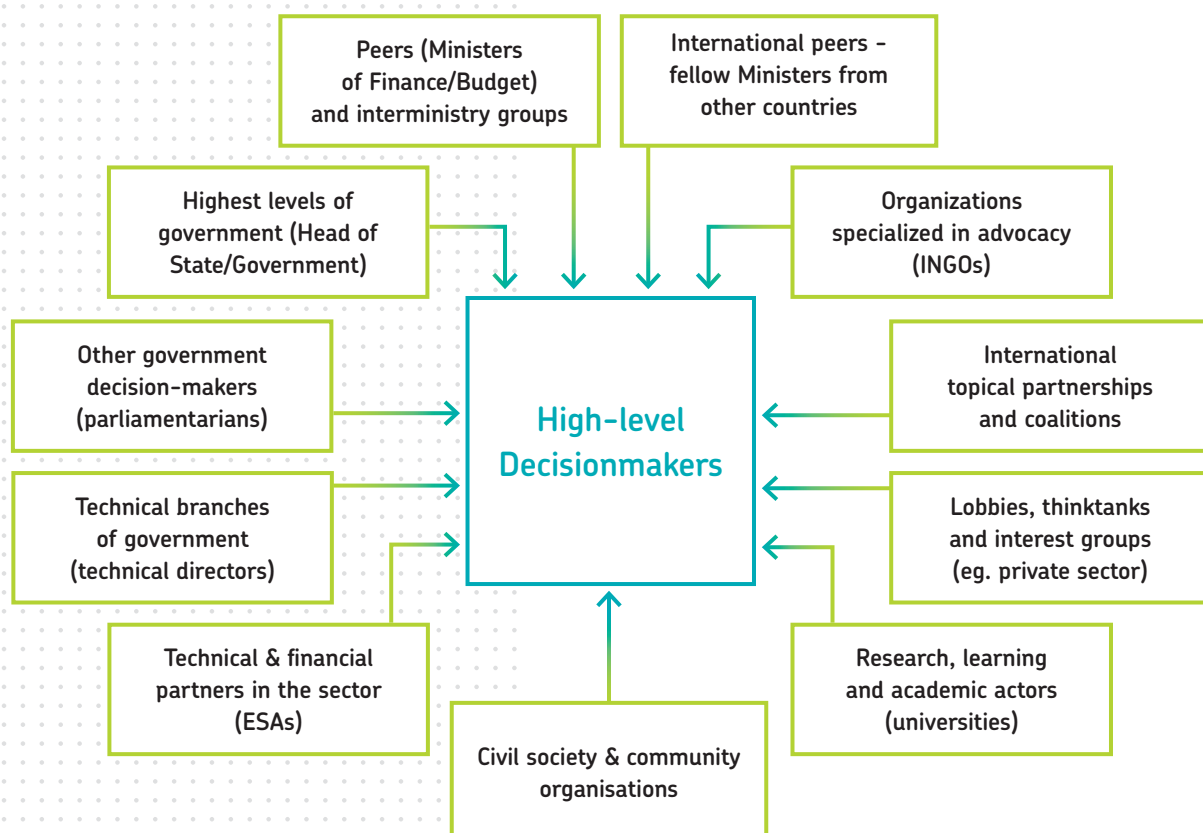
Advocacy is used as a tool to spark and sustain improvements in many social fields, across the globe. The strongest evidence on the impact of advocacy comes from the fields of public health and ecology. Advocacy organizations can produce three types of political outcomes: **direct benefits** (the extent to which movements secure gains for their constituents), **distributive changes** (aggregate consequences of multiple groups' achievement of direct benefits – for instance, the positive evolution of funding to a sector which has several strong advocates working on direct benefits); and **systemic effects** (which occur when advocates go beyond achieving benefits for their own constituents and change the structures, systems, or schemas of political decision-making²).



Understanding high-level advocacy

Decision-making at the highest level can be divided into three categories – decisions relating to policy and strategy; those related to financing; and those related to technical and tactical matters. Such decisions are made at all scales, from the most local to the international – accordingly, high-level advocacy has bearing on all levels even though the ‘pressure-point’ for such advocacy is often at the national and international levels. Depending on the organisation of decision-making processes in a particular context, there might be significant overlap between the three categories. A decision to change sector policy can, for example, have a direct bearing on decisions related to finance, and can mould technical decisions.

High-level decision-makers who make the three categories of decisions mentioned above, are influenced by a multitude of actors in the decision-making process. The major such actors are shown in the figure below. Advocacy therefore potentially includes the interactions between all these actors and the high-level decision-makers. Advocacy planning entails the development of goals, targets and indicators of success; the crafting of evidence-based messages and asks; and a mapping of decision-makers and opportunities, such as high-level meetings and technical briefings, lobbying for policy change, advocacy campaigns and so on. Change takes place over time, so the results of the advocacy will not be immediate. However, the advocacy effort is likely to be more successful when done in coordination with partners who share the same goals.





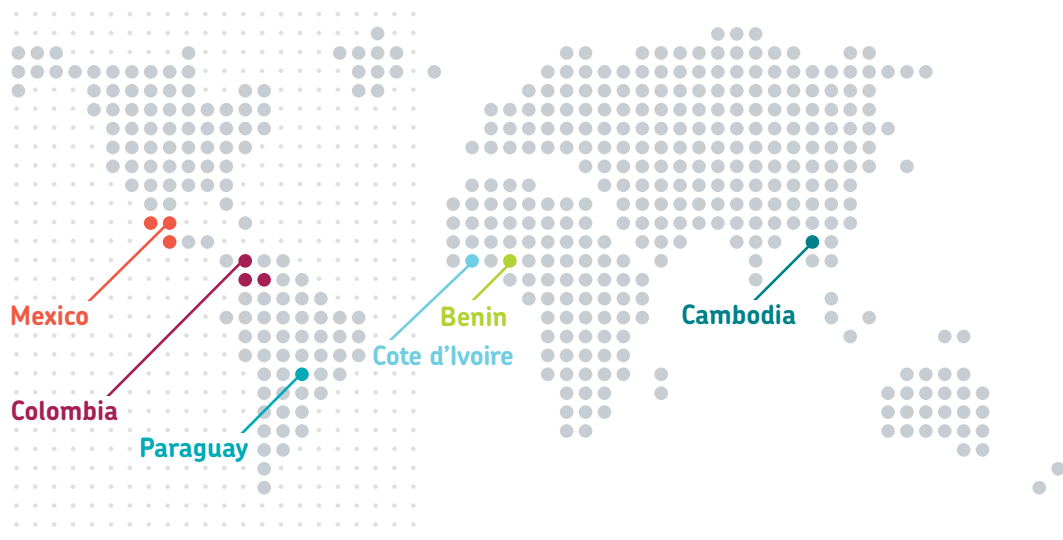
Testimonials from countries- From High-level Advocacy to Impact

To illustrate the impact of high-level advocacy, we collected testimonials from SWA partner countries across the globe and present specific initiatives that show the link between high-level advocacy and changes on the ground – these **links can often only be established by following initiatives over several years.**

We note that these testimonials speak of a combination of:

- advocacy *to* high-level decision-makers
- advocacy *by* high-level decision-makers
- advocacy via SWA

“CAMBODIA’S EXPERIENCES SHOW THAT TO MAKE HIGH-LEVEL ADVOCACY MORE EFFECTIVE WE NEED-CONCERTED EFFORTS BASED ON UP TO DATE STRATEGIES AND FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO TAKE ACTIONS BASED ON COMMITMENTS”



Cambodia

SWA welcomed Cambodia to the partnership in 2020. The year marked the first full year of Cambodia's National Action Plan for the sector – a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral strategy defining its path towards delivering the SDGs in the country. The strategy builds on previous sector models to highlight expected programming and financing gaps for the sector, helping decision makers anticipate and intervene in areas where bottlenecks could hamper progress. The strategy echoes SWA's principles,

particularly on strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation: forging strong links with nutrition programming, as well as with the education and health sectors.

One of the major factors of success for this strong strategic framework for WASH was the presence of the Prime Minister in a national workshop on sanitation that immediately elevated the profile of rural sanitation in the country. Moreover, the



leadership of Minister of Rural Development has spurred the establishment of sub-national mechanisms that enable a better coordination among stakeholders to implement the WASH program more effectively and efficiently. A key part of Cambodia's plan for the sector is its aim to eliminate open defecation by 2025, five years ahead of the SDG target – and it has sought innovative ways to finance this ambitious goal. During 2020, the first 'Development Impact Bond' (or 'DIB') for the sector was rolled out in earnest across Cambodia. The programme draws on expertise of the private sector and the principle of payment-by-results, as opposed to traditional grant funding. These experiences in Cambodia show that high level advocacy is essential to spur actions at all levels. However, to sustain the gain made and to enable concrete impacts at the community level, continuing political, financial and technical support is needed in order to enable communities, especially the poor and vulnerable, to benefit from the improvement that would result in better health, human dignity and economic gains.

“BENIN’S EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT POLITICAL ADVOCACY IS A SPARK. THE SPARK ONLY WORKS WHEN A SET OF INITIAL CONDITIONS ARE MET; YET, THE EXISTENCE OF THE INITIAL CONDITIONS IS ONLY USEFUL IF THIS SPARK IS PRESENT”

Benin

In 2014, Benin's Minister of Health participated in SWA's High-Level Meeting in Washington, DC. **Convinced that “WASH is the alpha and the omega of health”, the Minister was able to advocate to international partners via the SWA platform** and to become part of the “Projet d'accélération des ODD” project, funded by the Dutch cooperation and implemented by UNICEF. This project introduced Community-Led Total Sanitation to Benin for the first time as a concerted strategy, and ended in 2020. Today, CLTS is engrained in Benin for rural sanitation, as a fitting complement to the market-based approach to urban sanitation. The project is considered the starting point for activities in hygiene and sanitation at community level. After the initial funding ended, Benin applied for – and received – follow-up funding; now, the country is vying for the next round of funding. The current Minister of Health continues to advocate for sanitation, and has obtained a promise for matching finances from the government budget, which is a pre-condition for further funding. As the SWA focal point in the Benin government noted, “political advocacy is essential for impact on the ground, and it is essential for political decision-makers to set the tone”. Benin's experience shows the importance of political advocacy as a spark. The spark only works when a set of initial conditions are met; yet, the existence of the initial conditions is only useful if this spark is present. “If the WASH Minister is insensitive to the sector, then no matter how many technical arguments we have, the sector will not be a priority.” A clear vision for the future (knowing where we are going) and demonstrable benefits (marking where we have reached) thus become crucial conditions for convincing decision-makers to become champions for water, sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, Ministers and political decision-makers need to be accompanied by robust preparations – the technical in service of the political.



Cote d'Ivoire

In 2019, Cote d'Ivoire's Water resources Minister participated in the SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting. He spoke on behalf of himself and the sanitation Minister. The SWA-induced joint preparation and briefings for the SMM – where SWA armed the focal points with the right arguments and words to convince the sector Ministers and make these Ministers into champions for the sector – helped sensitise the Minister to WASH issues faced by the country. While the Sanitation Minister continues to be the strongest champion for WASH in Cote d'Ivoire, her advocacy is now strongly supported by the Water resources minister too – **this tandem of the water and sanitation ministers working together ensures that the sector's voice is louder and more important in the Council of Ministers meetings, the National assembly and the budget allocation sessions.** The results have been significant – the WASH budget has been validated for a three-year period and the sector is now funded as a multi-year “programme” (2021 – 2023) rather than as one-year “projects”. This will ensure that the sector continues to receive funding from the public purse even if there are changes at the Ministerial level. This continued financial attention is a key criterion for sustaining the gains achieved. The most important advocacy is from the WASH Ministers to the Budget and Finance Ministers, who channel and guide both the public spending and the donor funding in the country.

“IN COLOMBIA, THE PROGRESS IN WASH DURING COVID-19 IS THE RESULT OF MANY FACTORS, INCLUDING HIGH-LEVEL ADVOCACY COMING PRINCIPALLY FROM ACTORS LIKE EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY”

“IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE, THE WATER RESOURCES AND SANITATION MINISTERS HAVE CHAMPIONED WASH TO THEIR GOVERNMENT COLLEAGUES, IN SUCH A WAY TO ENSURE THAT THE SECTOR CONTINUES TO RECEIVE FUNDING FROM THE PUBLIC PURSE EVEN IF THERE ARE CHANGES AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL”

Colombia

Over the past two years, several Latin American countries have seen increased attention to WASH at the highest levels of decision-making. More specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the commitment of countries to intensify their actions in water and sanitation. Colombia, under its leaving no-one behind approach, prioritized the provision of water and sanitation services to vulnerable populations and reprioritized its commitments to invest in the sector. This progress is the result of a several external and internal factors, including high-level advocacy to decision-makers, which came principally from sector actors like external support agencies and civil society. **SWA reiterated and reinforced the need to work on inequalities, to reduce the urban-rural WASH divide, and to place WASH more centrally in the COVID-19 response,** using mechanisms like the Sector Ministers' Meeting in Costa Rica in April 2019, the SWA leadership visit to Colombia in December 2019, the World Leaders' Call to Action in May 2020 (co-signed by the Colombian President), and the Ministerial Roundtable in July 2020. These examples demonstrate that multi-pronged advocacy is a crucial factor in accelerating progress on water, sanitation and hygiene, but has a two-way link with sector strengthening initiatives and other trends that create an enabling environment.



“IN PARAGUAY, THE ADVOCACY TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE NECESSITATED COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO WASH MINISTRIES SO AS TO ALIGN THEIR MESSAGES AND PRESENT THEM WITH A SINGLE VOICE – THE INTRA-SECTOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE IS CONSEQUENTLY”

Paraguay

The Ministry of Public Works, which represents Paraguay on SWA, had hitherto been unable to engage effectively with the Ministry of Finance. **The 2020 SWA Finance Ministers’ Meeting provided a suitable occasion for a meeting with the Minister of Finance of the country.** The topic of WASH as an investment was impressed upon the Minister of Finance, notably in terms of WASH infrastructure and water governance. This advocacy to the Ministry of Finance also necessitated coordination between the two WASH-related ministries so as to align their messages and present them with a single voice – the intra-sector political dialogue is consequently stronger. The successful advocacy by the Ministers in charge of WASH has led to WASH appearing more prominently on the agenda of the Ministry of Finance.

Mexico

Civil society organizations in Mexico have been advocating to the government to improve the accuracy of national data on water and sanitation coverage and align it with the international reporting criteria – and, thereby, to improve evidence-based planning thanks to more reliable data. Thanks to continuous advocacy, civil society in the country was able to complement and complete WASH coverage data to Mexico’s 2018 National Voluntary Review to the UN High Level Political Forum. As a consequence of advocacy by these and other actors, in 2020 the new National Water Program included more reliable data, acknowledging inequalities as well as the challenges the country still faces, in particular in poorer areas, informal settlements, but also schools and health care facilities.

“IN MEXICO, THANKS TO CONTINUOUS ADVOCACY, CIVIL SOCIETY WAS ABLE TO IMPRESS UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO COMPLEMENT AND COMPLETE WASH COVERAGE DATA. THIS HAS LED TO MORE RELIABLE SECTOR DATA UPON WHICH TO BUILD POLICIES AND STRATEGIES”