



SWA Communications  
2022-2025 Strategy

# Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Communications at SWA</u>	4
<u>Goals of the Communications Strategy</u>	5
<u>Audiences, channels, and activities</u>	6
<u>Monitoring and budget</u>	9
<u>Milestones</u>	10

# Introduction

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Effective communications are at the heart of the SWA partnership; they are a fundamental element of its work that is critical to achieving the partnership's vision and mission. SWA amplifies the voice of the sector, to raise the profile and political currency of water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as mobilizing collective efforts, and ways to fund the sector properly to achieve SDG 6.

For any organization, the role of communications is to help plan, focus and act strategically – enhancing its ability to co-ordinate and achieve its strategic objectives. It is through effective communications that an organization develops and sustains relationships with key audiences and builds trust through a strong reputation. It means identifying and formulating clear strategic messages and delivering them in the most accessible and effective way possible.

Communications are the key tool of SWA's advocacy and engagement with the public. They are central to increasing the political visibility and prioritization of water, sanitation, and hygiene, in turn accelerating efforts to reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. They are key to delivering the objectives in SWA's current Strategy for 2020–2030, as well as efforts towards eliminating inequalities in the sector and realizing the human rights to water and sanitation by 2030. Communications are also a crucial element of SWA's regional 'Roadmaps', which guide the coming few years of the partnership's work. The Roadmaps are action-oriented, living

documents, designed to help the partnership visualize how it can achieve its strategic objectives, globally and in each of its regions by 2025.

The purpose of this communications strategy is to support these strategic objectives of the partnership, informing and guiding communications actions of SWA across the partnership. It will directly inform the engagement and strategic communications activities of the SWA Secretariat, as well as SWA's leadership, Steering Committee, and other governance bodies. It is also intended to enhance and complement the communications work of SWA partners in-country. This communications strategy provides clarity around SWA's thinking and approach for the next few years, allowing partners to think about where the approach fits with their organizational objectives, and to consider how they might utilize SWA's communications work to boost the impact of their own strategies and priorities for the sector.

**This strategy sets out specific communications goals to guide the partnership's work over the next few years and describes the various elements which will come together to achieve those goals.**

Ultimately, the strategy outlines how SWA will work to enhance the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector's position as a cornerstone of development. The final decade of the SDGs is fast unfolding; now more than ever it is vital for our sector to speak with one voice: with consistency, continuity, and credibility.

# Communications at SWA

SWA is built on the premise that the partnership can achieve more together than the sum of the actions of individual partners alone would. This principle applies to communications at SWA. This means a focus on defining common advocacy goals, and working to enhance and complement partners' own communications work, rather than a focus on rigid control over messaging, or centralized communications campaigns.

SWA seeks to build and use the power of its brand; to amplify the partnership's collective voice; and to focus on the broader picture – such as the fundamental importance of SDG 6, and of realizing the human rights to water and sanitation. This is where SWA's key strengths lie – in its ability to amplify voices from countries to influence and focus advocacy across the world, to increase political will and prioritization for the sector. The relationship between the Secretariat and the wider SWA partnership is one of mutual reinforcement. Their respective roles in communications for SWA are described below.

## The Secretariat:

- Managing SWA branding and communications platforms
- Ensuring visibility of partners' joint activities through SWA-managed channels
- Developing and distributing timely, engaging, high-quality messaging and materials
- Increasing visibility of SWA's leadership and their messages
- Creating opportunities for coordination among SWA communications practitioners
- Celebrating the richness of the partnership – its achievements and experiences and the impact of SWA
- Reach out partners through sharing Education and Communication (IEC)/Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) materials

## Partners:

- Participating in the development of joint messaging and joint communications activities
- Representing SWA and sharing its messages
- Adapting and using messaging and materials according to their own strategic objectives
- Promoting SWA, its framework and activities through their own communications channels
- Being effective and authoritative SWA spokespeople and champion

## Key communications challenges for SWA to consider:

There is no doubt that water, sanitation, and hygiene is critical to every country's development aims. This offers a major opportunity for sector communications. However, the sector faces significant challenges in terms of how it communicates, which can often affect its ability to connect with people. For example, the sector has a tendency towards overly technical language and jargon; it is often more comfortable talking about hardware and technology than matters of public policy. And there are subjects within the sector that be difficult to talk about – particularly for sanitation and hygiene (e.g. menstrual health, or faecal sludge management).

In addition, while delivering 'pipes and toilets' provides a clear story to tell, capturing and sharing the impact of advocacy, or enabling systems change and good governance – the central elements of SWA's work – can be much more difficult.

As a sector, we need to consider how to overcome these challenges better – particularly if we want to communicate effectively with stakeholders outside the sector.

# Goals of the Communications Strategy

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The overall objective of the strategy is: to increase the impact of the SWA partnership, and to amplify the voice of the sector in order to achieve SDG 6.

To achieve this objective there will be three communications goals:

**1. To reach ‘up’ to highest levels of decision-making:**

Amplifying the voice of the sector so it is heard more clearly and loudly at the highest levels of decision-making.

**2. To reach ‘out’ beyond the sector:** Raising and broadening profile of the sector – identifying and utilizing common themes that resonate across sectors and strengthening SWA’s reputation and brand.

**3. To reach ‘across’ the sector and partnership:**

Working to improve the way the sector itself communicates. Developing and harnessing the power of the network of communications experts within the partnership; building capacity to trigger a movement within the sector; uniting, aligning, and enabling partners to engage with key audiences in their context.

Across SWA, there are also several guiding elements that should be followed in the pursuit of the strategy’s goals – grounding the communications of the partnership in common principles:

**Amplify the voice of SWA partners:** Ensure the broadest range of experiences are heard, and speak up for those without access to other communications platforms.

**Ensure communications are evidence-based:** Engage others by drawing on the knowledge and experience of the partnership.

**Be responsive to needs of the partnership:** Be guided by strategic objectives, but flexible. Ensure communications adapt to context, country-level inputs, and requirements.

**Celebrate and encourage innovation:** Concentrate less on the technical, more on the inspirational. Be led by sharing and discussing successes, challenges, and learning. Champion pioneering work.

**Broaden the audience:** Speak more clearly as a sector; engage and be heard by audiences outside of it.

# Audiences, channels, and activities

The below table is an overview of SWA's communications audiences and the channels and activities we will jointly deploy to reach them. Worth noting that most of these channels and activities are cross-cutting across goals and audiences.

Goal	Audience	Actors & opportunities	Channel/Activity
<b>Reach 'up' to the highest levels of decision-making</b>	High-level decision makers: Heads of state and government; parliamentarians; heads of UN agencies, International Finance Institutions and cooperation agencies; industry and non-profit leaders; regional inter-governmental institutions, regional development banks	SWA leadership (CEO, Steering Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media relations in leading platforms, including opinion-editorials, placements</li> <li>Joint press conferences and media appearances during leadership country visits</li> <li>Events, speeches, videos, statements</li> <li>SWA leadership social media accounts</li> <li>SWA website (articles, news, blogs)</li> </ul>
		Global Leadership Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key visibility opportunities: media, social media, website, video testimonials and interviews</li> </ul>
		SWA initiatives involving leadership (e.g. Global Leaders Call to Action)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix of activities (media, social media, events)</li> <li>Regional Roadmaps: creation of 'Regional Advocates' in Asia &amp; Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa regions</li> <li>Regional Roadmaps: Implement a 'High-level Advocacy Strategy' for each partner country in Latin America &amp; Caribbean region, with a strong focus on parliamentarians and ministers within and outside the sector</li> </ul>
		High-level meetings (global and regional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capturing engagement of high-level audiences in high-level meetings (e.g. live comms coverage on social media, live interviews, video reports, social media quotes, event report)</li> </ul>

Goal	Audience	Actors & opportunities	Channel/Activity
<p><b>Reach 'out' beyond the sector</b></p>	<p>Practitioners in sectors that depend on and/or impact on SDG 6 – climate, education, gender, etc.)</p>	<p>Events with connections with, or in partnership with, other sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using media, digital comms to create interest; document event live; capture &amp; promote main takeaways</li> <li>Partner with other organization(s) for joint activities (e.g. joint op-eds and interviews, twitter-takeovers, cross-posting of website content)</li> <li>Journalist training and capacity building</li> </ul>
	<p>General public, including youth, media, and influencers</p>	<p>International days related to WASH (World Water Day, World Toilet Day, World Handwashing Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pitch WASH-related stories to media, showcasing partners and leadership</li> <li>Propose publication on WASH-content for comms platforms of non-WASH organizations</li> <li>Add SWA's voice to joint campaign of the WASH sector led by UN-Water, WASH United, etc. – showcase SWA-specific content (multi-stakeholder approach, pollical prioritization)</li> </ul>
		<p>International non-WASH days (e.g. Women's, Environment, Health, Human Rights Days)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual themed comms campaigns mobilizing partners around non-WASH themes (such as the <a href="#">gender campaign</a>)</li> <li>Collect and disseminate stories illustration partners working together, and the impact of SWA</li> <li>Develop and publish knowledge products (e.g. reports, briefing papers, connected with SWA yearly substantive focus, like climate or crisis)</li> <li>Media relations (pitch WASH content connected to special day)</li> </ul>
		<p>Youth Champion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WASH Going On' interview series, prioritizing non-WASH interviewees</li> <li>Youth-related media engagement and events</li> <li>Leverage Champion's social media following</li> </ul>

Goal	Audience	Actors & opportunities	Channel/Activity
Reach 'across' the sector and partnership	Partners	Partners' platforms (website, social media, newsletters, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce and distribute products/ messaging/ toolkits, which partners can adapt to their context</li> <li>Support (technically and financially) national comms efforts led by partners (press conferences, journalist workshops, media placements, radio shows, etc)</li> <li>Publish SWA-related content in partners' platforms</li> </ul>
		High-level Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key moment for partners mobilization to increase visibility of WASH topics at global, regional, and national levels.</li> <li>Develop communications materials around the events, incl. key messages, testimonials, social media assets, banners, etc.</li> <li>Support (technically and financially) national comms efforts led by partners (press conferences, journalist workshops, media placements, radio shows, etc)</li> </ul>
		Webinars & other capacity building products and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication research and studies to increase efficiency of sector communication, especially with non-WASH audiences – share and build on this research across partners</li> <li>Assessment of partners' communications training needs and organization of webinars, production of training materials</li> <li>Regional Roadmaps: Strengthen the coordination of advocacy actions at regional and country level in Latin America &amp; Caribbean region</li> <li>Regional Roadmaps: Strengthen partners' capacity for advocacy and decision-making that prioritises the most vulnerable groups in Latin America &amp; Caribbean region</li> <li>Regional Roadmaps: Design and deliver an advocacy campaign and capacity development activities in Middle East &amp; North Africa region</li> </ul>
	Current and potential donors	Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated comms materials and products (e.g. SWA Secretariat Quarterly Notes, Annual and mid-year Reports)</li> <li>Collect, develop and share SWA impact stories</li> <li>Joint actions, such as op-eds, cross promotion of events and activities</li> </ul>
	Potential a and sector actors outside the SWA partnership	Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and package SWA impact stories, partners testimonials</li> <li>Cross promotion of social media campaigns and traditional media engagement</li> </ul>

# Monitoring and budget

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This communications strategy will be monitored in line with indicators of the [SWA Results Framework](#), which includes specific communications-related indicators.

The SWA Secretariat also defines additional indicators each year which are connected to the SWA workplan. Each major activity of SWA (e.g. communications campaigns, and High-level Meetings) has its own indicators.

Monitoring of these set indicators is reported with the Steering Committee, the SWA partnership and wider public through the SWA annual report, which is published each spring for the previous year.

The budget for communications is also defined by the SWA Steering Committee annually, according to the levels of funding available.

# Milestones

Beyond SWA's strategic frameworks, this strategy is heavily shaped by key milestones such as SWA's High-level Meetings, annual themes (also defined by the Steering Committee – for example climate, global crises), and key sector and non-sector events, including:





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FOR ALL**

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**#SWAinAction**

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