“Campaigning on water and sanitation issues in Zambia during election time was really worth it. More politicians recognised the challenges around WASH, and we secured a commitment to prioritise the sector in terms of both funding and service delivery.”

Mubu Kalaluka, WASH network, Zambia
Working together to end the water and sanitation crisis

The water and sanitation crisis claims 4,000 children’s lives every day and impacts on the health, dignity, education and work opportunities of girls and women. Safe water and adequate sanitation are still not available to 40 per cent of the world. This crisis is completely preventable – but those in power are not doing enough to stop it.

All over the world, people are joining forces to end the water and sanitation crisis.

End Water Poverty is an international civil society coalition with over 190 member organisations in 45 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. Together we are campaigning to end the global water and sanitation crisis. Over one million actions have already been taken in support of the campaign, demonstrating a real global movement for change.

Campaigning gets results. Many organisations work hard to support the delivery of clean water or sanitation services. But we know what an uphill struggle it is. Without sufficient funding and commitment from governments, water and sanitation for all will never be achieved. That’s why it’s so important to campaign. We have to persuade our political leaders to make this issue a priority. And – as you will see from the examples included in this toolkit - the good news is that advocacy works.

“Election time really is a great time to campaign, as decision makers and aspiring candidates are more willing to talk to you, and you have a unique opportunity to influence both their immediate quick win promises and longer term plans.

“In Liberia we campaigned in the run up to an election on water and sanitation issues and this really helped us build the constituency of support we need in the Legislature to move closer to achieving our goals.

“This toolkit brings together experiences from End Water Poverty members, as well as ideas from other campaigns, to help you plan and run election campaigning in your own country. Good luck!”

Olivier Germain, previously of Oxfam Liberia and WASH Consortium Advocacy Manager

Elections are a great opportunity. We sometimes put campaigns on hold in the run up to elections because politicians are even busier than usual, and the public and media focus is on the political process. But elections are the time when politicians are most likely to listen, because they want the votes we can bring them. So think about making the next election a key moment in your campaign calendar - with good planning and dedicated resources - it could really help push water and sanitation demands up the political agenda.

There is no blueprint on how to do this – every country is different - but this toolkit brings together a range of ideas, examples and case studies from End Water Poverty members to help you use the opportunity of elections to campaign on water and sanitation issues. Most of the tools can be used in parliamentary, presidential, province-level or municipal elections to ensure that incoming representatives or elected officials prioritise WASH.

Check your country context. Sadly, political activity can be dangerous in some countries. In an election period this may be particularly true, so check it’s safe to campaign during this time.
Planning your election campaign

Start planning early - even if the election has not yet been called.

As with any campaign, you need to develop your basic strategy, so that everyone is clear on how you are going to go about achieving your campaign aims. Ideally, your election work should form one strand of your longer term campaign strategy, but if you don’t have one that’s fine - just start your strategy from now.

TIP:
Rooting your election campaign in a longer process demonstrates that you are interested in the issues, rather than just using the election to criticise your government or politicians. This could make election campaigning not only more effective, but also safer.

You probably have some long term aims and objectives agreed already (some people call these strategic objectives), but if not here are some examples to get you thinking...

Aim
For all the people of the country to have access to sanitation and clean water.

Strategic objectives
Strategic objectives are the things you need to achieve over the next three to five years in order to move closer towards your ultimate aim. Below are five types of objectives, with WASH examples for each.

1. New commitments
The government signs up to the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership by the end of the year.

2. Full funding for existing commitments
The government provides sufficient funding to meet existing commitments as presented to the High Level Meetings for SWA in 2012.

3. Targeted resources
Funding is targeted to the most marginalised communities, in particular to poor, rural women.

4. Effective planning and delivery
Actionable national plans for water and sanitation are created, that are integrated across sectors, by 2013.

5. Increased transparency and consultation
There is full consultation with civil society organisations in the planning and delivery of water and sanitation.

You could have one or all of these different types of objectives – and could have more than one of each type – but don’t overload yourself or you might not achieve any. Make sure your objectives are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (add your country’s relevant dates to the illustrative examples above).

Remember to check that you are not asking for something that has already been promised, and that any funding you call for relates to the commitments already made. Your government may have made commitments as part of a national policy paper or an international agreement. If, for example, your country is part of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership then commitments may have been made in advance of the High Level Meetings in either April 2010 or 2012. If you are in Africa, commitments may have been made as part of the eThekwini Declaration. In South Asia they could have been made as part of the Delhi or Colombo declarations on sanitation.
Milestones
Now you need to get some short term objectives or ‘milestones’ for your election campaign – things you want to achieve during the election that will contribute to your long term aims and objectives. You could decide to focus your short term objectives on party policy, individual candidates, or building voter capacity (or all three). In choosing, think about your strengths as an organisation as well as what needs to be done. Use the same rules as with developing strategic objectives. If there is a National Election Commission in your country ask them for dates and election processes. Aim to get specific commitments as well as general statements of support for WASH issues; this will make it easier to hold politicians to account later on.

Your milestones could be:

- The major parties’ manifestos (or policy statements) contain a funding commitment to water and sanitation
- Half of “key target” candidates make a personal commitment to meeting Sanitation and Water for All targets in the lifetime of the government
- One third of all candidates pledge to make water and sanitation a priority issue in Parliament by holding committee hearings
- Citizens in 10 communities are informed and empowered to use their votes in elections.
- You have a good working relationship with those in seats which could go either way.
- You have started early enough in the process

You might want to focus on individual candidates if:

- You have a ‘first past the post’ election system where individual candidates matter, particularly those in seats which could go either way.
- The power to make the changes you want lies with representatives up for election, whether this is the President, Ministers, or parliamentarians
- You have a good geographical reach and lots of supporters
- You have contacts in the media.

You may feel it’s important for you to help citizens understand the election process and how to make their voice heard on WASH issues if:

- Voters don’t feel that elections will change anything
- You have a good working relationship with communities that you could build on.

**TIP:**
Ask for more than you expect to get. The most surprising things can happen during elections when parties and candidates are competing to win votes.

**Step one – identify potential targets**

The candidates of today are the Ministers of tomorrow. Start by checking who is up for election then choose your targets. Think about who is likely to have influence on WASH issues and be sympathetic to the cause. Consider targeting:

- Spokespeople on finance or water and sanitation
- Up and coming candidates who may be the leaders of the future
- Candidates who have expressed interest in WASH issues
- Smaller parties who may hold the balance of power if there is no overall winner
- Opposition parties who are sympathetic and may be helpful to you in the future

If your objective is to get WASH demands into party policy documents or election manifestos then you will also need to find out who the key influencers of party policies are. Look out for behind the scenes advisors as well as elected representatives.

**Step two – ways to influence your targets**

For each of your targets, think about what they are interested in, and who or what is most likely to influence them. This information will then help you to decide the best tactics and methods to use to convince your targets. For instance, candidates in constituencies where the contest is close may be particularly receptive to pressure from their constituents.

As well as being influenced by voters and media coverage, targets may be persuaded by their campaign managers, press officers, researchers, or even their friends and family. Religious or other community leaders could also have a role to play. If any of these ‘influencers’ is already sympathetic to your cause, then you have a head start.

You should also think about your own strengths and weaknesses. For example do you have lots of supporters in a political leader’s constituency?

TIP:
Get to know the laws and regulations governing political activity in your area during an election. For example: you may need a police permit to run events involving candidates; if you provide support to one particular candidate they may have to declare any money you spend as part of their own election expenses; registered charities may be prohibited from taking sides, and face consequences if they break this rule.
CASE STUDY

WaterAid UK

Creating Coalitions and Developing Messages

Coalitions
You may already be campaigning with other organisations on water and sanitation issues. If not, you could think about forming an alliance. During elections you will compete with many other organisations for the candidates’ attention, and being big can help. Working in coalition takes time, but can bring great benefits including increased credibility with candidates, stronger voice and the potential to reach many more people. International and national NGOs can also complement each other in an alliance, providing different strengths.

Messages
Messages are the way that you frame your policy demands and should link back to the objectives you have set for your campaign. It is worth putting time into developing a set of core messages which you will use again and again.

Think: who?
• Who is your message for? Adapt your core messages for different audiences – candidates, media and voters.
• Who is going to be the most effective messenger - one trusted voice or 1,000 people protesting in the streets?

Think: why?
• Why are WASH issues topical? Try to link them to the main themes of current political debate.
• Why should the candidate listen to you? It could be that you represent a broad constituency, or that your issue is a vote winner.

Think: what?
• What will make your message stand out at this crowded time? WaterAid UK grabbed attention by delivering their election messages in a bottle.
• What works? Make sure you test out your messages first on others.
Methods - the tools to use

There are many tools you can use to influence your targets at election time. Which methods you choose should depend on your milestones, targets and organisational capacity.

Here are a range of ideas to get you thinking...

Contact with party officials
Some of your campaigning can be done through contact between your staff and party officials. If there is a formal consultation process for party manifestos you could make a submission. Alternatively, you could meet privately with key party staff and politicians. Such meetings can allow you to develop policy together. You must start early, often before the election is called, there is no point in making contact once policies have already been agreed. Party head offices should be able to provide you with key dates.

TIP:
It always helps if politicians think a new initiative is their own idea – so let them take the credit for your proposals!

Meetings with candidates
If candidates are prepared to meet with constituents, this can be a great way of showing the strength of feeling on WASH issues.

Do brief the participants beforehand, providing questions and points that relate back to your campaign objectives. Anticipating the likely responses will also help your supporters handle the meeting well. Remind them to be polite and clear – they are representing the cause and you don’t want to alienate anyone at this stage.

WASH campaigners in Zambia met with candidates during the 2011 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections, and invited them to officiate at community functions. This was a way of exposing them to the WASH challenges and gaining both radio and TV coverage. The campaign succeeded in securing a commitment to prioritise funding and service delivery in the WASH sector.

If you have the resources, print some ‘pledge cards’ for candidates to sign. Take care that the pledges reflect your objectives, and are what you what you want candidates to do if elected.

Anyone standing for election is likely to be attracted by the opportunity of media coverage, so you could invite them to sign the pledge at a press stunt or event you are organising. After the election, you can contact the successful candidates and remind them of the commitments they made.

Writing to candidates
Encourage voters to e-mail or write to their candidates asking them to support specific commitments on water and sanitation. Provide a sample letter or suggested questions, but explain that adding a personalised message will have even more impact. Candidates may send a reply so be prepared to help your supporters respond. And don’t forget to supply contact details for local candidates, or explain how they can be found.

The voters you approach could be supporters of your organisation, communities that you work with or groups within the general public likely to be sympathetic to water and sanitation issues. It’s best if supporters identify themselves as constituents (rather than members of an organisation) as those standing for election are likely to be more responsive.

Roundtables and panels
Inviting your targets to speak on panels or roundtables is an effective way of exposing candidates to issues on WASH. Giving them a platform demonstrates that this is a good issue to win them publicity, and ensures they spend a bit of time reading up on the issue. With roundtables, you could invite journalists or academics as well. It is important to have a good attendance so promote the debate online, distribute flyers, and contact local media. A high profile chair will also bring people in. Think carefully about which parties you want to involve, and then treat all candidates fairly with equal time to talk and answer questions. Remember to get commitments from the candidates before they go home too. Then, in your follow up, write thank you letters, and include a reminder of the commitments made. Publicity afterwards is important too, so you could blog about the event and send out a press release.

In Sierra Leone, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Network (WASH-net) made a big splash with a panel event to launch its WASH Manifesto Campaign in February 2012.

The Deputy Ministry of Energy and Water Resources was the key speaker at the event and attendees included representatives from political parties, staff of key ministries, journalists, members of civil society and even local council representatives. Bringing together so many stakeholders was a success and inviting the target politician to speak was a good way of getting them to understand WASH issues. Like any good campaigners they also took advantage of having all the network members in one place – and finalised the Election Campaign strategy at the same time.

TIP:
Balance is vital during elections. Ensure a range of different parties are represented at the public events and private meetings you arrange. Think very carefully before endorsing one party or another.

Mubu Kalaluka, ROCS, Zambia

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ELECTION TOOLKIT
Rallies and mass events
It’s great if you can show your targets just how many voters are concerned about WASH by mobilising supporters at a mass event.

If political parties organise a rally – use the opportunity to make sure your presence is known. You could make some banners or get t-shirts printed. Or, if you have good contacts, see if you can get someone from your campaign on the platform. The catchier your message the more likely it will stay in people’s minds. If you have the resources, you could even organise your own mass event. To make an impact, your event could be very large, you could even organise your own mass event. To multiply the number of people you reach and so put more pressure on your targets. Always check local reporting restrictions during elections and on polling day. It may, for example, be illegal for the media to report an event that doesn’t have representatives from all parties present.

Think carefully about what will make a good media story or photo – you could try street theatre, exhibitions and visual stunts (such as a huge crowd of women at a broken water point or people dressed as giant taps). If local radio is the main media then think about noisy events with good sound effects. You could also contact local radio phone-ins, which can be a very cheap and easy way to tell people about your campaign.

The media
It is worth trying to get media coverage of any public event you are organising – it will greatly multiply the number of people you reach and so put more pressure on your targets. Always check local reporting restrictions during elections and on polling day. It may, for example, be illegal for the media to report an event that doesn’t have representatives from all parties present.

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Digital campaigning
All over the world election organisers are increasingly using SMS and the internet as ways of communicating directly with voters. This could work for you too!

- Text supporters with updates on campaign events or ask them to text you to add their name to your petition.
- Post your materials and photos on your website to tell supporters about your campaign aims and activities.
- You could use facebook to tell people about your campaign and to organise rallies, panels, roundtables and other events. You can share photos and videos with your supporters too!
- Potential election candidates may have accounts on Twitter! One idea is to have a ‘tweet day’ in which you ask all of your supporters and followers to tweet a particular candidate with your campaign message. It’s a good idea to make sure you organise this in advance to make sure as many people as possible tweet! For more information about Twitter and how to use it, you can download our guide from our website.
- Use blogs (online journals) and vlogs (online video journals) to make the campaign come alive. You can also try to get your blogs featured on other websites to increase your profile. You could ask high-profile bloggers in your country to write about it too.
- Greatly increase visibility by putting details of your campaign on high traffic websites.

Voter education
If you already have education or community building programmes, then voter education is a possible part of your election work.

In a country where people are sceptical about elections, you may find mobilising support more difficult. To get people involved try to make the link between service delivery and government accountability. Citizen report cards are one good way of seeing whether real changes are being made on the ground. Feedback from service users can also then be used as a way of holding the government to account after the election.

Another option is to provide citizens with an analysis of each party’s approach to water and sanitation.

In Pakistan, the Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) ran a popular mobilisation campaign on WASH. Postcards were printed with questions for service providers, the government and parliamentarians. These were sent to (mostly rural) communities where people were encouraged to fill in the card and choose whether send it to a journalist, a political party or the government. Campaign organisers collected the postcards and passed them on to the chosen target.

The postcard campaign raised awareness amongst communities of their power as voters, and about who was responsible for water and sanitation provision. It also demonstrated to politicians that giving priority to WASH could be a vote winner, so preparing the ground for future elections.

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You’ve put a lot of work into reaching candidates during the election. Now is the time to build on any contacts you’ve made.

Keep up the pressure on successful candidates to turn campaign promises into action.

- Present your issues in a briefing for newly elected politicians and invite them to visit (or open) water and sanitation projects.
- Meet with new Ministers and supportive candidates to remind them of their promises.
- Encourage local supporters to write to their new representatives.
- Prepare a list of commitments you want the new government to make.

The first 100 days can be a useful landmark, by which time the new government will have laid out its priorities. After the 2010 election WaterAid UK prepared a ‘100 days call for action’ for the newly elected Coalition Government. On his 100th day in power a petition was presented to the Prime Minister. A comic touch helps in the UK context, so he was also given a copy of the satirical newspaper ‘Daily Diarrhoea’.

Don’t stop now!

Build contacts with the new government and continue to expose them to WASH priorities.

When the campaign is over, your very last job is to evaluate your work and identify lessons for the future. Then you’ll be ready for an even more successful campaign at the next election....
“Elections are one of the few times when we, as ordinary citizens, have the ears of the politicians and can raise our voices to tell them what matters to us most.”

Sarah Blakemore, Coordinator of End Water Poverty

“Candidates tend to know some of the issues, but are often more vague on what the solutions are and what they should be promoting, so this provides campaigners with a chance to both educate and influence key decision makers.”

Olivier Germain, formerly Oxfam Liberia and WASH Consortium Advocacy Manager

“The candidates of today are the Ministers of tomorrow.”

Mubu Kalaluka, ROCS, Zambia

“The run up to an election is a great time to talk to candidates - they need your vote so they will listen to what you have to say”.

Musa Ansumana Soko, Chairman of WASHNet, Sierra Leone

“The Network … needs to ensure elections deliver as tools to transform people’s lives positively; in other words, making voices and votes count in elections.”

Musa Ansumana Soko, Chairman of WASHNet, Sierra Leone