

## Better Governance for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services: A Necessary Requirement for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The Civil Society Organisations represented at the SWA Ministerial Meeting reconfirm their commitment to the implementation of the SWA strategy and collaborative behaviours:



Source: SWA, 2015

### Call for Action:

Achieving universal access to services is only possible with government leadership, political commitment, and if policy makers and service providers are held accountable for equity of services for all. Success of the SDGs would mean every household and public institution (e.g. schools and clinics) has access to water and sanitation services that last.

To meet the needs of the 660 million who lack water and 2.4 billion who lack sanitation, with population growth increasing, by 2030, will require change. Addressing these systemic challenges requires changes in the practices of developing countries and their development partners. Without such changes, in the next five years, the SDG targets of universal access to water and sanitation by 2030 will remain out of reach.

### As Civil Society Organisations we call for:

- Governments (national and local) to explicitly acknowledge the human right to WASH and develop realistic plans to achieve universal access to WASH services by 2030.
- Governments to commit and track the reduction of inequalities in service delivery. In order to leave no one behind and to deliver universal services we must tackle inequalities by targeting resources at the most marginalised and excluded people, and ensure the articulation of their rights to WASH services is met with responsive and accountable service provision.
- Public and private sector providers of WASH services to put in place meaningful measures to extend services to the poorest and those most excluded, and have active processes for assessing user satisfaction.
- Governments to undertake transparent allocation of water resources that take into account the human right to water and sanitation and the role that ecosystems play in supporting this.
- Governments to create effective water governance mechanisms that take WASH delivery into account in water resource management policy and planning.
- Governments and private sector to develop the tools and allocate the resources to ensure that ecosystem services are safeguarded and balanced among competing uses. Private users of water resources, other than for domestic WASH services, to actively support good water governance.

- Development partners, including the private sector, to commit to supporting government and government plans and ensure that finance and technical assistance is clearly aligned with these plans. In 2013, more than 85 percent of water and sanitation aid was delivered as project-type interventions; the sector remains highly fragmented, and alignment behind strong country systems has been limited.

## What we already know

**Practical implementation of human right to water and sanitation.** The human right to water and sanitation was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2010 and by its Human Rights Council in September 2010. Five years on, the number of countries that specify water as a human right in their constitutions or national legislation is growing: two-thirds of the 94 countries surveyed by the WHO recognise drinking water and sanitation as a human right, and 80 percent have national policies on water and sanitation. Despite some progress, gender inequality persists, and women remain more likely to engage in vulnerable work, marry before the age of 18 and face the brunt of the burden of lack of access to safe and sustainable water and sanitation.

**Lack of citizen participation.** Users are not adequately involved in decision-making on WASH service delivery. Public and private service providers often lack mechanisms for user feedback and access to reliable data for most citizens is limited.

**The unserved are increasingly concentrated in certain regions and countries.** More than three-quarters of those without access to water or sanitation live in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Eastern Asia. Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa alone account for 839 million of those who practise open defecation. Rural households account for 80 percent of those who lack access to improved drinking water and 70 percent of those who live without improved sanitation.

**Competing uses for water.** The UN SDGs recognise the integrated nature of targets that are water related. WASH, water security and the environment are integrated, making its governance a challenge to the global community. Increasing water demands for different uses, in combination with climate uncertainty, endanger the security of water resources. Rising water demand from agriculture, industry and energy, coupled with climate change impacts on the water cycle, means that by 2030, 47 percent of the world population will be living in areas of high water stress. Water stress and scarcity are increasing in all regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central Asia facing the greatest conflicts between water demand and supply. Despite this, the development of WASH services does not always account for vulnerability of water-regulating ecosystems, and WASH users are not engaged in water resource management governance. The urban poor are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change, as they often live in densely populated and disaster-prone areas.

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