Together we call for change: unite for a better future!

Introduction
Water Action Month 2016: what a success! Members and supporters around the world joined together in March, uniting civil society and calling for a better future for all. 2016 saw a remarkable change in End Water Poverty’s annual advocacy campaign with the launch of a global month of action, taking the place of World Walks for Water and Sanitation. This report explores the highlights of Water Action Month (WAM) 2016, and offers recommendations based on feedback from members as to how to increase our impact and make 2017 a truly successful campaign.

Key campaign themes used in 2016
1. This year is the start of the new global sustainable development framework with the launch of Agenda 2030. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are important priorities through Goal 6. As a result of this, 2016 is a key opportunity for engagement and advocacy on WASH and its fundamental role in achieving so many of the global goals.
2. It is also an important year for WASH advocates, with the recognition of the human rights to water and sanitation confirmed as two standalone but indivisible rights. Now is the time for national level implementation plans to be developed, and these must prioritise WASH.
3. A united, strong civil society calling for change and a better future is essential for powerful change. We have to work together to improve life for all around the world, and to tell governments to keep their promises and realise commitments on WASH. We must ensure we leave no one behind.
Background to the 2016 campaign

- EWP’s Steering Committee made the decision at the 2015 Planning Meeting to change the focus of the annual mass mobilisation activity ‘World Walks for Water and Sanitation’. Three key decisions were made:
  - The campaign was to be fully incorporated into EWP’s ‘Keep Your Promises’ in terms of branding and messaging. It was agreed to completely rebrand, and have the global month of action take the place as EWP’s lead annual campaign.
  - It was agreed campaign actions prioritised deeper national and regional advocacy: a move away from just mass mobilisation public walks to activities achieving longer term impact and more developed advocacy.
  - The campaign would run for a month long, with activities to take place through March, moving away just focus on World Water Day (22 March).
- The success of the campaign was dependent on the participation and engagement of members around the world working with the Secretariat, and actively supporting the campaign by holding events and outreach. It was agreed that localisation was to be prioritised by ensuring tailoring of messages and resources, led by members, with overall support from the Secretariat.

2016 WAM outreach and support

- It has been a very successful transition from ‘World Walks’ to WAM, one that members have actively supported, and it is now truly embedded in EWP’s work as its leading annual campaign. Members valued the move to a more flexible campaign, with a selection of messages, a range of dates they could engage on and the opportunity to hold a range of activities. Due to this flexibility, members have been able to hold activities best suited to them, adapt key messages to local contexts, and connect as part of the broader EWP and WAM global movement. Members around the world fully embraced the new focus and key messages, and there was renewed energy and engagement in EWP as a global coalition and our campaign work.
- Members in over 30 countries (as well as globally through international members) supported the campaign, either by holding activities and events, or through online engagement and outreach. In many countries, more than one organisation supported WAM; for example, in India there were over 5 organisations around the country showing support and engaging local communities, including many country chapters of the Freshwater Action Network - South Asia (FANSA) regional network, which contributed to a strong national presence.
- There was a high degree of engagement with WAM that helped increase brand awareness of the campaign and of EWP, both online and offline, and a wide range of activities were held throughout the month. These were diverse and creative, showing that members embraced the move away from just walks to host diverse events most appropriate to them, their communities and their work. Activities included: petition signing and submission of petitions to government representatives, sit-in protests, advocacy workshops, meetings with government representatives, school education programmes, community engagement workshops, media training with journalists and civil society, media engagement, marches and rallies, public seminars, debates, concerts, radio shows, book launches, flash mobs and many more!
- Social and traditional media: there was a significant increase in followers on all platforms including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram; seven new followers on average per day joined on Twitter alone in March! An Instagram account was set up for WAM, a new venture for EWP and helped to boost engagement by cross-posting on different platforms. WAM engagement helped strengthen EWP’s role as a powerful online influencer; we were named one of the top five influencers around World Water Day on Twitter. Through their events, WAM also gave members good opportunities to engage traditional media with events and advocacy messages covered in local news.
- WAM was supported by a wide range of stakeholders, including organisations who previously have not engaged with EWP or our campaigns; such as the Rainforest Alliance, the Salvation Army UK, and Global Health Network. March also saw a new campaign launched on social media - March4Nutrition - which provided a good opportunity to continue our work on the linkages between WASH and nutrition.
EWP Secretariat support

- The Secretariat developed a range of resources for members including: new branding of the campaign (an new logo and image); ‘save the date’ poster and flyer for promotion (both of which were translated into French and Spanish); a comprehensive Digital Campaigning Guide on how to use social media for advocacy; advocacy postcards to distribute to communities and government representatives; an Activities Toolbox (on the range of actions members could hold to support the campaign); awareness posters on regional and global commitments (SACOSAN, AFRICASAN and LATINOSAN and the SDGs); a Checklist for planning a campaign; a Key Facts and Figures poster highlighting the global WASH crisis; as well as 6 case studies on successful advocacy actions by members. All resources were available free to download from the EWP website; these were well received as is evident by the increase in website traffic and downloads. The online walk was integrated into the EWP website (and the previous World Walks website and social media channels were shut down).

- The Secretariat formed a WAM task team consisting of 15 EWP members from around the world. Chaired by Joanna Fatch (EWP Steering Committee member), the task team helped finalise core steps of the transition work plan, such as the new name, logo, key messages and focus, and in increasing awareness of the campaign. The task team helped ensure all campaign messages and activities were reflective of EWP members’ needs and requests.

- The Secretariat supported 15 members financially through reimbursements to help support advocacy actions. These small reimbursements helped cover costs such as venue hire for meetings and advocacy materials. This was a great support to members who face the challenge of very limited budgets for advocacy campaigns actions. Through the open call application process, we received 37 submissions in total, showing how many members valued and needed this support.

- An online events calendar was added on the website for members to post news about activities. All communications platforms were streamlined with the close of the World Walks website, Facebook page and Twitter feed to really bring Water Action Month under EWP’s ‘Keep Your Promises’ campaign, and to ensure WAM is an integrated, core part of EWP’s work.

- The Secretariat engaged with key coalitions and networks to help promote the campaign and connect to other WASH sector stakeholders, such as UN Water, the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership, the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) as well as the Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing coalition (who lead on Global Handwashing Day). This helped to increase awareness and engagement in the campaign and strengthen partnerships within the EWP coalition.
Case studies from members in 2016

Zambia: led by Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN)

Zambia was a great example of how WAM was beneficial in connecting members and encouraging working together. The Secretariat worked closely with VAREN on their advocacy plans and helped them connect with a new member in Zambia so that they could work together to have a stronger voice. This is a direct benefit of being in a coalition, and highlights how campaigns can help connect people to maximise the impact of their advocacy. VAREN also worked very closely with another EWP member - WaterAid Zambia - showing the power of combined actions. VAREN and partners held a range of activities throughout the month, each helping to strengthen civil society’s advocacy to raise awareness with their communities and to increase pressure on governments. These included advocacy workshops, awareness meetings with community leaders, public rallies, school workshops to engage the youth, as well as meetings with government representatives. A key achievement was the submission of a petition which collected 10000 signatures calling for government to realise the human rights to water and sanitation. This was a great success, as the petition was submitted to key government officials present at the final public rally. VAREN also used WAM to strengthen their media outreach, by using video and radio broadcasts to spread news about the campaign and their main demands. “Water Action Month was one of the most exciting opportunities to amplify the voice of the people to our leaders, using a community based approach. These different activities allowed us to push the government to expedite the process of mobilising WASH funds and create specific plans to address WASH challenges. The campaign month also helped to improve and strengthen the knowledge of communities in understanding their rights to demand for safe and clean water and sanitation.” - Jackson Mwenya of VAREN, Zambia.

India: Led by Viswa Yuva Kendra, the Freshwater Action Network – South Asia (FANSA): Odisha Chapter, Indian Institute of Youth and Development (IIYD) and other partner organisations

India was another successful case study of the impact civil society can achieve when organisations work together. A number of EWP and FANSA members worked together in Odisha province in India, on a range of WAM activities, helping to strengthen their advocacy. Working together helped increase the number of communities they reached. They were successful in holding a wide range of activities throughout the month. All organisations ran multiple school education programmes, to engage school children on WASH in over 10 districts in the state, as well as community sensitisation programmes. They also held awareness campaigns and held media awareness workshops with journalists to sensitise them about the water and sanitation crisis and what was needed to address the issues. This helped to broaden their reach and get
their message heard. Together they gathered over 75,000 petition signatures which were submitted to government. They also held a district and state level advocacy workshop and seminar, as the culmination of their activities in the month to make as much noise as possible for advocacy. These seminars got much media coverage, helping to raise their profile and their key demands. Both organisations truly valued participation in WAM as it helped elevate their advocacy and engagement in the province. A very high number of FANSA members around South Asia were very active in support and engaging with WAM, which was a fantastic achievement and outreach on our key demands.

“Once again thank you very much and EWP team for supporting WAM 2016. Without EWP support the events of entire month could not have happened. It is a great association of FANSA Odisha chapter with EWP.” – Manoj K. Mohapatra, Director, Viswa Yuva Kendra.

Costa Rica: Freshwater Action Network- Central America (FANCA), Asociación Regional Centroamericana para el Agua y el Ambiente (ARCA), and other supporting organisations

WAM activities in Costa Rica were another successful example of how EWP members worked together to increase their impact and outreach. Organisations in Costa Rica worked as a coalition, holding a range of activities in the month, targeting a number of different audiences and advocacy targets. Activities included a public free music concert with famous musicians, held on one of the central streets in the capital of the country to engage the public and raise awareness, to a night bicycle ride bringing people together to advocate for change. The highlight was a public high-level seminar, bringing experts in the WASH sector, together with government representatives and media to advocate to improve the lives of the people and to demand for change.

Other activities around the world

• In Liberia, a range of EWP members including WaterAid Liberia and the Liberian WASH CSOs Network, worked together to ensure united advocacy throughout WAM. Focusing primarily on government as their advocacy target, over 75 campaigners held a public sit-in protest outside of the Ministry of Health, and submitted a signed petition calling for an improvement in access to WASH around the country. This got good media coverage, helping to make a loud noise about their demands. Their participation in WAM helped boost the coverage and awareness of their work.

• FANSA members throughout South Asia were very active, holding a full range of activities and actions. For example, IRSP had a whole calendar of events throughout the month. Through WAM, EWP reached out to new members and countries we had not previously engaged with. For example, a new FANSA member from Afghanistan held several MHM workshops in their communities as part of WAM.

• Aidlink, Ireland have long supported EWP and the World Walks campaign, using this as a way to raise awareness about their work in Ireland and in Africa. They used these as opportunities to engage with school children as important agents of change. 2016 saw a major success for them, where they finally realised their vision of Irish school children walking together with their counterparts in Uganda.

• The German Toilet Organisation and the German WASH network held a flash mob at Berlin’s central station on International Women’s Day to raise aware of menstrual hygiene management and the struggles women and girls face.

• There was also much engagement from WaterAid country programmes, were often they worked in partnership with EWP members. Countries included Madagascar, Sierra Leone and Liberia, Nigeria, Zambia, Pakistan and India.
Feedback and evaluation of 2016’s campaign

From the Secretariat’s perspective, we felt that 2016’s WAM was a great success. We were able to ensure a smooth transition from World Walks to the new global month of action, and despite this being a new campaign, managed to garner strong support and engagement from members around the world, making it a truly global, month long campaign. It was a positive sign that members engaged in the campaign and the key asks and activities, and implemented a diverse range of actions. WAM helped to unite civil society, and to establish a strong voice. This also helped to extend actions in March from advocacy being concentrated around World Water Day to engagement throughout the month to increase awareness in our core messages.

Campaign actions really worked well when members took ownership of it, and worked with the Secretariat to tailor these tools. For example, many members translated the materials themselves, helped with spreading the information to their networks, and used the branding in unique ways. This highlights that the simplicity of the messaging and the branding helped members to own the campaign.

WAM helped leverage high levels of online support and opportunities to engage – not only with existing partners and members, but also broaden the scope of who we engaged with, and increased our brand awareness. This is evident through the increase in followers, as well as website visits. WAM provided a good opportunity to promote members work, their advocacy and EWP, through blogs, social media posts, photos and such. This was a positive way to showcase our members and the work our coalition does.

Both an evaluation of WAM 2016 and recommendations for the future were discussed in detail at EWP’s International Planning Meeting in April 2016, which gathered EWP’s Steering Committee members, along with members of the WAM task team. Overall, the committee agreed that the inaugural launch of WAM had been a success, and was to remain as the flagship annual campaign mobilisation for EWP.

Difficulties experienced

- A full month is a long time to sustain energy and engagement; it is difficult to continue support throughout the month and keep members engaged and active. This is especially difficult given the limited capacity internally at the Secretariat. Additional support through recruitment of a volunteer and service providers should ease this in 2017, but it will remain a challenge to ensure engagement throughout a month-long campaign.
- The dual activities of maintaining high level of support to members, while simultaneously developing resources was very time consuming, again primarily due to limited staff capacity.
- The rebranding process, including shutting down the dedicated website and social media for World Walks, and moving all resources to the EWP website was a difficult, time consuming process, as it was dependent on working with external service providers and their own timelines. Luckily this has now been completed fully, so 2017 will be a smoother process.
- Members need to be more active in tailoring resources to their specific contexts and to the issues that they work on. This wasn’t picked up as much as it could be by members, and the Secretariat was largely responsible for translation and tailoring.
- The WAM task team was active in the beginning of the process, but then active engagement waned over time. It is difficult getting consensus with 15 members in the team, which was a time consuming process to reach consensus to approve of the final decisions. Going forward, it will be best to establish a ‘majority rules’ decision vote so as to process decisions and actions quicker.

Members’ feedback

Strengths

- So many agreed that WAM was a great opportunity for members to unite for a common campaign, to work together, engage a full range of audiences and targets for advocacy, great visibility for their work and WASH issues.
- Members really valued the campaign and the opportunity to advocate for change.
- WAM was a good opportunity to link members’ work and advocacy to a bigger, global campaign – many managed to tailor this to local needs and issues.
• WAM was a fantastic opportunity to increase the EWP brand awareness and international presence, as well as at the national level, through members’ activities and promotion.
• Members and partners provided very positive feedback that this was an excellent, unique and powerful opportunity! The Steering Committee representatives themselves at the EWP Planning Meeting in April 2016 confirmed their approval and satisfaction with how WAM had been planned and implemented and deemed it a successful venture for EWP to continue with in future.

Challenges
• Members mentioned that they feel they lack sufficient advocacy skills and capacity to maximise their impact. For example, media engagement in many countries is often expensive and difficult to secure.
• It was mentioned that there is a challenge of organisations working in isolation, rather than together, particularly at district level, resulting in a limited collective voice. In some countries, there is a lack of cohesion in the sector. There was a request from members to establish coordinated country-specific advocacy asks and improved linkages between civil society organisations (help connect EWP members so that they can work together and ensure a strong voice). Coordinating and connecting actors would also help address the challenge of implementing activities with limited resources.
• It was a difficult challenge for the Secretariat to assess the actual scale of how many people participated (challenge of data collection), how many organisations supported the campaign and which members were doing what. It was also a challenge to get updates and active, regular communications from members.
• Follow-up in terms of longer term impact and continued advocacy is a challenge for members. Currently most organisations are only able to hold one-off activities, whereas advocacy for sustainable change needs regular follow up and continued engagement with government, service delivery agents and other stakeholders. Members feel they lack the capacity to continue pressure for change.
• Funding and limited budgets are a major challenge for most organisations, adding to the difficulty of realising and implementing larger scale advocacy.
• It was felt by members that WAM works really well for Southern-based members as they can tailor the campaign to their issues and work, and the range of messages and activities suits and aligns with their overall advocacy, but that it doesn’t really appeal to or suit Northern members in the same way. This is something that will need to be assessed and improved.

Recommendations (from members, WAM task team and EWP Steering Committee)
• There is a need to map out the roles for all actors involved in the campaign at each level, and plan who the main advocacy targets are per level (national, regional and global) with members, then create possible strategies and activities to engage these targets. The Secretariat and members are to remain flexible and dynamic with regards to planning and implementation of WAM – this is to continue to ensure actions and messaging suit all members, that members have a clear plan and strategy for their advocacy, that they are supported in their work, and that the campaign is adaptable to ensure success.
• The task team will be continued as they were a critical body helping with the planning of the campaign, and a formal mechanism for getting members’ input and validation of the campaign. It has been agreed at EWP’s International Planning Meeting that the task team would continue its work but that Joanna Fatch would potentially step down as chair to open up the position for any other EWP member wishing to take the role. The task team will be opened up to other members so as to be as inclusive and representative as possible, and to engage as many members in the active planning and implementation of the campaign. There is a clear need for continuous joint working and engagement with members to help tailor messages and directly support members work on WAM.
• We need to allow for more time to help members prepare their plans and assist directly with advocacy planning and capacity building, through a priority on creating more tailor-made resources. It was agreed that the task team and secretariat will prioritise developing resources, branding and key messages in advance of March so as to allow sufficient time for members to work on advocacy and outreach plans.
• Because of amendments to the partnership agreement with EWP’s host WaterAid, EWP will no longer be able to provide any direct financial support to members in the future. The Secretariat will need to
work very closely with the task team in order to carefully plan what form support will take and how to best ensure members are supported in their campaign work. The Secretariat will work more closely with members and networks to create tailored resources and plans that will directly benefit their work. Members will have to take an active role in developing these as due to the large size of the coalition, and the limited capacity of the secretariat, we will all need to work closely together to maximise our limited resources and our impact together.

- Together with the task team, the secretariat will assess different ways to engage members, such as through webinars, skype training workshops, train-the-trainer workshop, or media engagement guidelines and other ways, to seek alternative ways to support members given limited budget.
- Establish regional and national WAM focal points to help disseminate information and to act as the main contact points for members to access information and resources. They would also be responsible for helping to feedback to the Secretariat about members activities, and be the main contact points tracking activities and events. Members also need to help in reaching out to other civil society groups, and other partners and networks. The Secretariat can help initiate, facilitate and support this, but needs active help and engagement from members themselves to make a big splash and loud noise for WAM at national and local levels, and reach out to their networks directly.

End Water Poverty looks forward to continue to strengthen this campaign and to work together with our members to make Water Action Month a key global campaign and advocacy activity worldwide. For future steps for 2017, see the separate End Water Poverty Water Action Month strategy and work plan.

Countries that supported Water Action Month through actions, events, outreach and online support included: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Germany, Ghana, Guinee, India, Ireland, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Swaziland, Tanzania, The Netherlands, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zambia and Zimbabwe.