

Enhance
government
leadership of sector
planning
processes

Strengthen and use
country systems

Use one
information
and mutual
accountability
platform

Build sustainable
water and sanitation
sector financing
strategies

1. Enhance government leadership of sector planning processes

*This paper is part of a series of briefs outlining the four **SWA Collaborative Behaviours**¹. These papers draw on recent empirical evidence from eight case-studies² carried out by partners of Sanitation and Water for All's Country Processes Task Team along with broader evidence drawn from both the WASH sector and beyond.*

Building sector leadership

Consistent government leadership and policy direction, both within the WASH sector and across the broader political environment, is necessary to deliver universal and sustained access to WASH. This leadership includes: setting the rules and guidance needed to agree sector priorities; taking clear policy decisions (e.g. on cost recovery, subsidies and private sector participation); developing the plans and processes needed to implement priorities; and directing and coordinating resources – including external support – around the sector priorities. Leadership is equally needed to periodically review policy and implementation progress against service delivery, institutional development and mutual accountability targets across a country, state or territory.

Building sector leadership requires action from all stakeholders. Governments need to have an identified lead agency, and a transparent and defined participatory planning process. Country leadership cannot flourish when services are consistently delivered outside country-owned and government driven sector planning processes. Development partners (bi- and multi-lateral organizations as well as non-state actors financing the sector) need to be willing to support the country-led process both by investing in building capacity of those involved in leadership and planning by operating within, rather than outside, the country-led framework.

¹ The other briefs in this series can [be found here](#).

² The case study material is drawn from the following countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Liberia, Niger, South Sudan, Timor Leste. The case studies were conducted by IRC, WaterAid and the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank.

The importance of sector planning processes

To achieve universal access to sustainable WASH services, government leadership must be focused on development of an overarching national development strategy.

The most effective country plans, often set in the broader context of a Sector Wide Approach to planning (SWAp), are those that seek to balance programmes and activities oriented at expansion of WASH coverage with programmes and activities focused on sector reform and strengthening sector capacities for equitable and sustained WASH service delivery. Such plans can provide a roadmap for effective use of aid and development resources to address capacity, systems, financing and coordination bottlenecks to achieving equitable and sustainable access for all.

Evidence suggests sector progress is greatest when these plans are in turn supported by an inclusive, government-led system that includes coordination of sector stakeholders and a cyclical review process, to ensure a feedback loop between analysis and planning, and foster evidence-based decision making. A sector system that links monitoring, accountability and learning is able to continuously innovate, evolve and adapt to changing circumstances and demands in a way that is vital for delivering sustainable and equitable services. Sector coordination meetings and a formal, participatory review cycle such as a Joint Sector Review (JSR), can be key components of such a system³. Local government leadership in planning, coordinating and monitoring of all sector interventions and resources within the local government's jurisdiction is also critical, to overcome uncoordinated interventions and fragmentation of development interventions at local level.

Of the 94 respondents to the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) 2014, only 27% have a water plan that is being fully implemented, funded and regularly reviewed. For sanitation and hygiene these figures are even lower, at 23% and 19% respectively. Fewer than one third have human resource strategies (GLAAS 2014). Weak local governments are a common bottleneck in ensuring equitable service delivery across most developing countries. Political aspirations to improve access to water and sanitation are thus impeded by the absence of an institutionalized planning system capable not only of formulating plans, but also driving implementation and conducting regular and meaningful reviews. Delivering water and sanitation for all will therefore require stakeholders to work together to enhance government leadership of sector planning processes at all levels.

Learning from current practice

Government leadership plays a crucial role in the development of country planning processes. In Lao PDR, which increased access to basic sanitation in rural areas from 10% in 1995 to 38% in 2008⁴, progress is attributed to institutional innovation on the part of Government, including a successively revised and updated strategy for rural water supply and sanitation. This incorporated creation and capacity building of a lead agency for the subsector (Nam Saat). In Liberia, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Honduras, South Sudan and East Timor, there are similar signs of stronger ownership through development of country and sector plans that are helping governments to articulate goals for sector access and financing as well as support required for institutional, systems, human resource and

³ See Paper on Behaviour 3: One information and accountability platform

⁴ Mason & Rabinowitz. 2014. *Progressing aid effectiveness in the WASH sector*

leadership development. In some countries these have included arrangements for common mechanisms for aid delivery, for example, a program approach in Niger and a consolidated WASH account in Ethiopia.

Clear sector priorities lay the foundations for inter-ministerial collaboration and improved development cooperation. Encouraging politically powerful government entities, such as the Ministry of Planning or Ministry of Finance, to prioritize WASH and to ensure increasing government financial contributions to the sector is critical in driving sector performance. A good quality plan helps government to be clear on budget and support requests from both the Ministry of Finance and external partners. It can also provide a platform for more effective collaboration with other sectoral institutions, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. In the health sector, health compacts have been used in 12 countries to consolidate stakeholder efforts in support of the sector plan, improve harmonisation and alignment and contribute to resource mobilisation. The compacts have increased the involvement of non-health Ministries such as in Benin where dialogue with Ministry of Finance was increased through the compact or in Liberia, where the development of the WASH compact increased collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. Experience from the health sector also shows that clearly articulated sector planning processes can help sector partners and government agencies gain more clarity on their roles and how they contribute to achieving the broader sector vision.

Government commitment to strengthen planning processes is not always matched by development partners. Countries are demonstrating increasing willingness to develop and put in place costed plans. At the 2014 HLM, more than three quarters of SWA country partners committed to improving planning (for example by developing or strengthening sector plans, aligning WASH plans to national development strategies such as PRSPs, and prioritizing WASH in a sector wide approach). These are important commitments which should be supported by development partners. However, development partner commitments at the 2014 SWA High Level Meeting did not reflect a commensurate level of focus on supporting planning processes. Evidence suggests donor alignment to sector goals and access targets (policy alignment) is more apparent than development partner support for the building capacity of systems, processes and aid delivery mechanisms defined by a government led planning process (process alignment).

A Sector-wide Approach to Planning (SWAp) can be built from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down. Though recourse to high level development assistance dialogue is critical in bringing partners together around the adoption of a common service delivery approach, work on improving aid effectiveness can and should start at the sector level. For example in Liberia and in Honduras many of elements of a SWAp have now emerged albeit through a rather piecemeal process of sector strengthening. Without the top-down impetus of a budget or sector budget support program – as was the case, for example, in Ethiopia and Uganda respectively in the early 2000s – bringing stakeholders around a common country-led plan, budget and implementation strategy is a slower and more fragile process but essential all the same. Donor and developing country WASH specialists should work together to advance sector coordination mechanisms including the mechanisms such as joint sector review processes that support sector learning and can in the medium term improve alignment of donors and non-state actors with government plans and targets.

Recommendations

Government-led inclusive planning processes are the roadmap for achieving universal access to sustainable sanitation, hygiene and water services. Weak capacity to set targets, formulate plans and undertake reviews of implementation are the main bottlenecks for ensuring that countries achieve their aspirations for universal access and guaranteeing the right to water and sanitation.

To enhance government leadership of sector planning processes, developing country governments should:

- Lead the development of one national WASH plan that reflects national targets and priorities;
- Through an identified lead ministry, ensure that all line ministries and government agencies responsible for WASH are involved in shaping the national development plan and targets;
- Ensure coherence among sector policies, plans and the legal framework at all levels (national and decentralized levels);
- Provide an inclusive environment at national and decentralized levels to guarantee consultative development and review of sector plans and policies ;
- Build capacities for planning, monitoring, joint systematic review, and analysis at both national and local levels, to ensure the sector is supported by a sound system that closes the loop between analysis and planning.

Development partners should:

- Seek full alignment to the sector plans by supporting both the sector vision and mechanisms for effectively delivering development assistance;
- Support line ministries responsible for WASH by coordinating, harmonizing and aligning aid for infrastructure, Technical Assistance (TA) and training with the one national WASH plan;
- Ensure that the infrastructure investments build, not undermine, the capacity of the line ministries to oversee policy and planning of sector investment;
- Follow and support the national governments' efforts to lead the development and review of sector strategies, and work with the government to build or strengthen national and decentralized planning processes and capacities;
- Support national governments in developing and implementing strategies and programmes of decentralization and capacity building of local governments and service providers.