



# MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

An analysis of **gender** related commitments  
tabled under the MAM

*March 2024*

# MAM commitments in focus:

## *Gender*

### About the Mutual Accountability Mechanism

SWA's [Mutual Accountability Mechanism \(MAM\)](#) is the only global accountability process that is dedicated to all stakeholders working together towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals' water and sanitation targets. Since the MAM was created by the partnership in 2018, 450 global and national commitments have been tabled by stakeholders from 65 countries across the globe. Following a multi-stakeholder, government-led process, 200 out of 450 commitments were submitted by national governments from 49 countries in the 'global south'.

Commitments are periodically monitored by partners through multi-stakeholder dialogues, in an exercise of mutual accountability towards collaborative action. SWA's High-level Meetings are also key accountability moments, when ministers often showcase the achievement of their commitments, providing inspiration and learnings for what is possible. Progress reported by partners so far shows that, until March 2024, 98 commitments tabled under the MAM had been 'fully achieved' or 'nearly fully achieved'. The first MAM Global Report can be found [here](#) and the next one will be published in September 2024.

### Gender

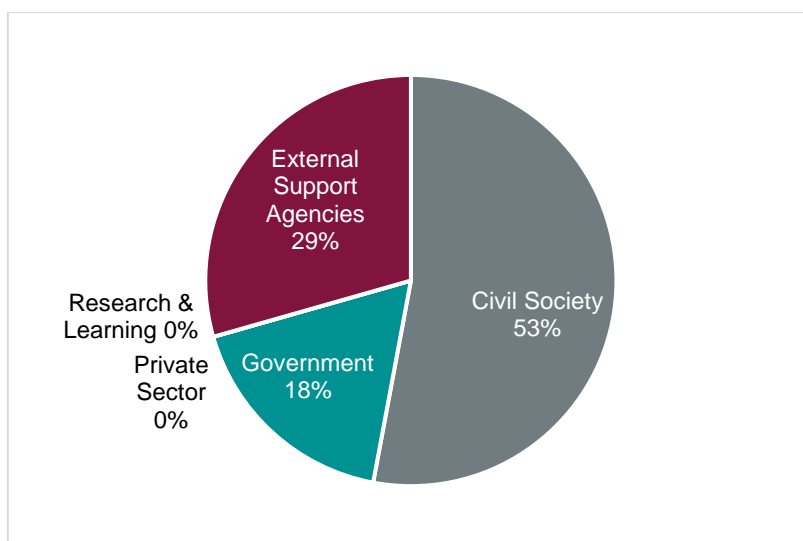
Throughout all of SWA's work, priority is placed on the elimination of inequalities, including gender inequalities, as well as the realization of human rights. SWA's work on gender draws attention not only to the disproportionate burden placed on women and girls when they lack access to water and sanitation, but also how services and systems function better when they benefit from women's participation.

Accountability strengthens governments' capacity to create the right systems and institutions necessary for service delivery, creating a clear route for gender equality to be embedded in national policy and programming.

This analysis focuses on all commitments related to gender which have been tabled by governmental and non-governmental partners under the SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism until March 2024.

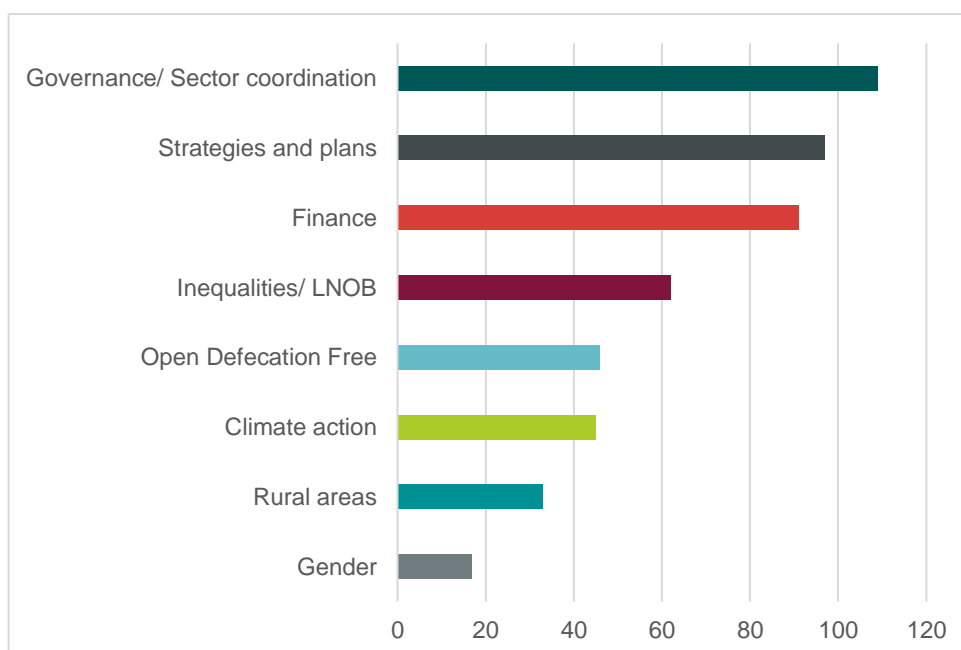
### Overview

- Among the 450 commitments tabled under the MAM, **17 commitments** prioritize or mention gender-related targets.
- **10** of these commitments were made by global partners and target multiple countries.
- Only **3** governments have tabled gender-related commitments: Bangladesh, Cambodia and Guinea.
- Currently, **civil society** is the main constituency prioritizing gender equity and inclusion, having tabled 9 out of the 17 existing commitments.



*Commitments per theme (Source: SWA MAM Database, March 2024)*

- If compared with other key SWA priority themes, such as finance, climate and inequalities, the number of gender-related commitments is **very low**.



*Commitments per theme (Source: SWA MAM Database, March 2024)*

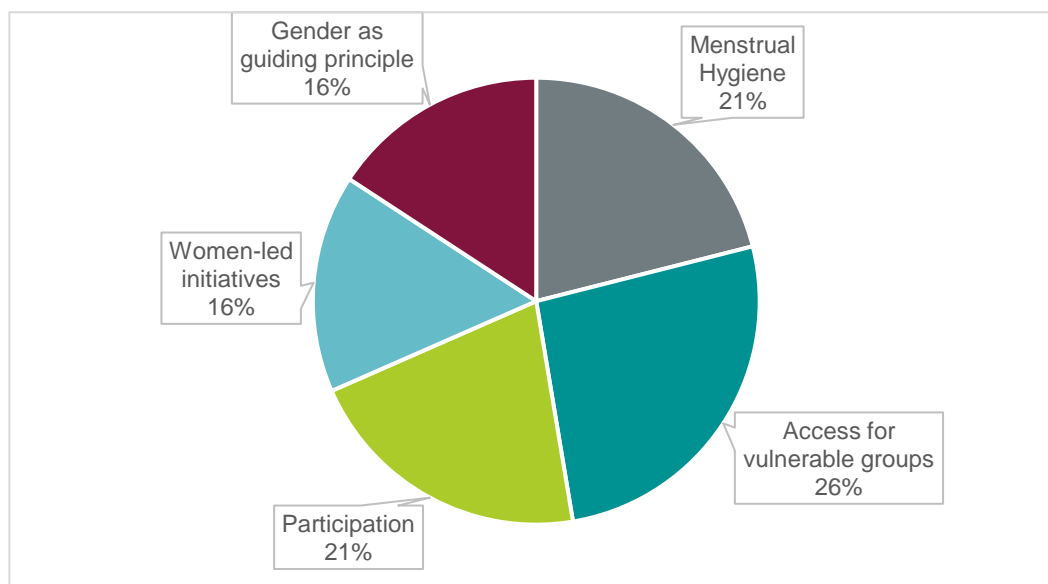
- SWA urges partners to collaborate to **integrate gender considerations into their commitments**. These actions may include, for instance, targeted funding and good practices for improving participation in decision-making, as well as ensuring access to water and sanitation for women and girls.

### What partners are committing to

All the dimensions of limited access (availability, accessibility, and affordability) should be taken into consideration while designing gender-aware policies. To this end, SWA country partners can

identify how to improve the lives of women and girls through better access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and show leadership by developing strong strategies for challenging gender norms, as well as supporting the leadership and empowerment of women.

Existing gender-related commitments tabled under the Mutual Accountability Mechanism can be grouped around the following broad topics:



*Commitments per sub-theme (Source: SWA MAM Database, March 2024)*

- Global and regional commitments from FCDO, FANSA and UNICEF as well as national commitments from the Government of Cambodia and the Bangladeshi CSO Network of Networks pledge to **improve access** to water, sanitation and hygiene services for women and girls along with vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, elderly, children and persons with disabilities.
- The civil society organizations CEAMSO (Paraguay), Network of Networks (Bangladesh) and White Ribbon Alliance (global), as well as the Asian Development Bank have committed to advocating for more **participation** of women and girls in decision-making, policy design and multi-stakeholder processes.

*“Encourage the inclusion of the gender perspective in the National Drinking Water Plan and in community water management by developing manuals and methodologies to be replicated by community organizations.”*

Lead body: **Centro de Estudios Ambientales y Sociales – CEAMSO**  
(Paraguay, CSO)

- In Asia, the Bangladeshi government has committed to increasing funding, while the CSOs Network of Networks (Bangladesh) and FANSA (India and regional) are committed to advocating for more resources for hygiene and **Menstrual Hygiene Management**.

*“Develop rigorous analysis on the status of progress on hygiene in South Asia and basing on the same develop common advocacy messages for CSOs around financing for hygiene including Menstrual Health Hygiene Management.”*

Lead body: **Freshwater Action Network South Asia**

- The Asian Development Bank and Global Water Challenge are committed to promoting **women-led actions** through the implementation of purposely designed initiatives and the support of ‘innovative women-led programming and water enterprises’, respectively.

*“Implement the Accelerating Women’s Inclusion in Water Initiative. The initiative aims to 1. Better measure and track gendered dimensions of women’s water insecurity, and women’s representation in water leadership and policymaking roles, including the need for enhanced data collection efforts and establishing baselines; 2. Share transformative practices, which have good potential for scale-up and replication, to enhance women’s leadership and water resilience and security; 3. Form a multi-stakeholder platform, the ‘Inclusion Roundtable’, to exchange ideas and views on how to accelerate women’s inclusion in water; and 4. Promote investments in gender equity in the water sector.”*

Lead body: **Asian Development Bank**

Target year: **2025**

- The external support agencies World Health Organization and UNICEF as well as the Government of Guinea mention gender equality as one of the **guiding principles** of their commitments, along with other cross-cutting themes such as disabilities, social inclusion climate resilience, and sustainability.

[Note on methodology: The sub-themes were created based on the description of the commitments and are based on subjective judgement.]

## Progress reported

Progress has only been reported on four of the 17 existing gender-related commitments:

- CEAMSO: on the commitment to “encourage the inclusion of gender perspective in the National Drinking Water Plan and in community water management by developing manuals and methodologies to be replicated by community organizations”, CEAMSO achieved ‘**some progress**’. They managed to create manuals and methodology specifying strategies and actions, but the incorporation of gender in the national plan by the government is yet to happen.
- FANSA: on the commitment to “support four national CSO platforms to advocate for equitable and inclusive sanitation progress with focus on women, children, elderly and persons with disability” by 2022, it was reported that ‘**limited progress**’ was achieved. FANSA prepared two analyses on the inclusiveness of Swachh Bharat Mission’s sanitation progress and the status of WASH services for the frontline sanitation workers and persons with disabilities. Progress stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of financial resources.
- FANSA: on the commitment to “develop analysis on the status of progress on hygiene in South Asia and develop common advocacy messages around financing for hygiene

including Menstrual Health Hygiene Management” by 2020, ‘no progress’ was achieved due to the COVID-19 pandemic and difficulties in raising the required resources.

- UNICEF: on the commitment to ‘contribute to strengthened and resourced water, sanitation and hygiene systems and empowered communities for gender-equal, inclusive, affordable and sustainable services in more than 100 countries’, UNICEF achieved only ‘some progress’ due to a lack of the funding resources needed to drive results.

*[Progress on existing commitments can be reported using this [link](#).]*

## Recommendations

The very low number of existing gender-related commitments (17) among the 450 existing MAM commitments and the difficulties reported in the implementation of four of these commitments provide empirical evidence of some of the challenges the sector faces in prioritizing gender equality in its policies, institutions, financing, and capacity.

Achieving the SDGs will rely on inclusive policies that consider the needs of women and girls. Policies that empower women and girls enable them to be key actors of change – both in the management and in the design of water, sanitation and hygiene services. Without a significant shift, the gender inequality that jeopardizes the SDGs, and blights so many lives, will continue to have a negative effect on us all.

To find a **checklist** of recommendations on how SWA’s building blocks implementation strategies can address gender inequality in an integrated manner, please refer to the briefing paper ‘[Strengthening gender equality in access to water, sanitation and Hygiene](#)’ published by SWA in 2021.