Watershed
empowering citizens

Watershed- empowering citizens is a strategic partnership designed to strengthen policy and advocacy capacity of civil society globally. We will focus on the linkages between Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Water Resources Management (WRM). The programme is active in Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Mali and Uganda. Other partnerships will be developed in The Netherlands and at international level.

Watershed is a partnership of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IRC, Simavi, Wetlands International and Akvo.

The long-term objective of Watershed is improved governance for WASH and WRM so that all citizens, including the most marginalised, can benefit from sustainable services. The immediate goal is to enhance citizens' ability to obtain information so that civil society organisations (CSOs) can advocate for change based on reliable, accurate data.

Achieving SDG 6 through empowering civil society organisations

Watershed in Brief

Themes
- Integration of WASH and WRM: what, who, how?
- Budget tracking and public finance for sustainable WASH services: how much, for what, why?

Learning components
- How do we use evidence for change in the sector? What works? How can governance and service delivery be improved?

Lobbying and advocacy
- Support CSOs to identify and use reliable data sources and collect evidence.
- Support CSOs to developing policy briefs for evidence-based advocacy and lobbying.
- Help CSOs raise their profile and build credibility, legitimacy and support for the sector.
- Hold public hearings and debates, within existing governance structures, to enhance understanding of WASH and WRM and financing roles, rights and responsibilities.
- Organise workshops on using online platforms for data sharing and conduct validation meetings with users and target institutions.
- Create multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination platforms.

Capacity building
- Build the capacities of CSOs in WASH and WRM policy analysis.
- Build the capacities of CSOs for facilitating dialogue and accountability forums at district and regional levels for joint learning about successes and failures.
- Train CSOs and government workers in using social accountability tools to engage communities in WASH and WRM service provision.
- Train CSOs and government workers in methodologies for budget tracking at national and district levels.

Evidence and knowledge
- Policy analysis to inform sector debates on WRM and WASH.
- Compelling accounts based on stakeholders' experience.
- Use of data on WRM and WASH to enhance dialogue and exchange.
- Tracking of WASH and WRM budgets and expenditure, using the life-cycle costs approach and TrackFin.

What challenges will Watershed address?

The Watershed programme began by developing a context analysis to understand the environment in which Watershed partners will work. The analysis revealed the challenges that the programme and its civil society partners will address in each country.

Coordination of decentralised service delivery.
Countries have clear policies and mandates for service delivery at national, regional and district levels, but implementation remains weak. Developing sustainable and manageable structures at catchment level presents an ongoing challenge. *Watershed will lobby for the means to put policies and mandates into practice.*

Full integration of WASH and WRM.
Drinking water services and water resources management are addressed separately, even at the global level. Unless governance is harmonised, they will continue to be implemented by different institutional structures, with different priorities and finances. *Watershed will identify, in each of the countries, a geographical area and level of operation where WASH and WRM link can be made.*

Evidence-based decision making to inform implementation decisions.
Reliable, accurate data —essential for setting priorities, directing investments and effecting change - are scarce. Data are often collected without any clear purpose, or not reviewed, understood and used. *Watershed will support CSOs to engage with regional and district authorities and help develop a formal process to reflect on the evidence and learn from it.*

Equitable financing of WASH and WRM.
Increases in sector resources over the past decade have mainly been used to develop urban water supply and sanitation and, more recently, to construct new water systems in small towns. Allocations for drinking water, sanitation and water resources management remain low. The most neglected areas are mainly those where the poorest people live. *Watershed will support CSOs and government in using tools such as budget tracking to address inequalities in WASH and WRM financing.*
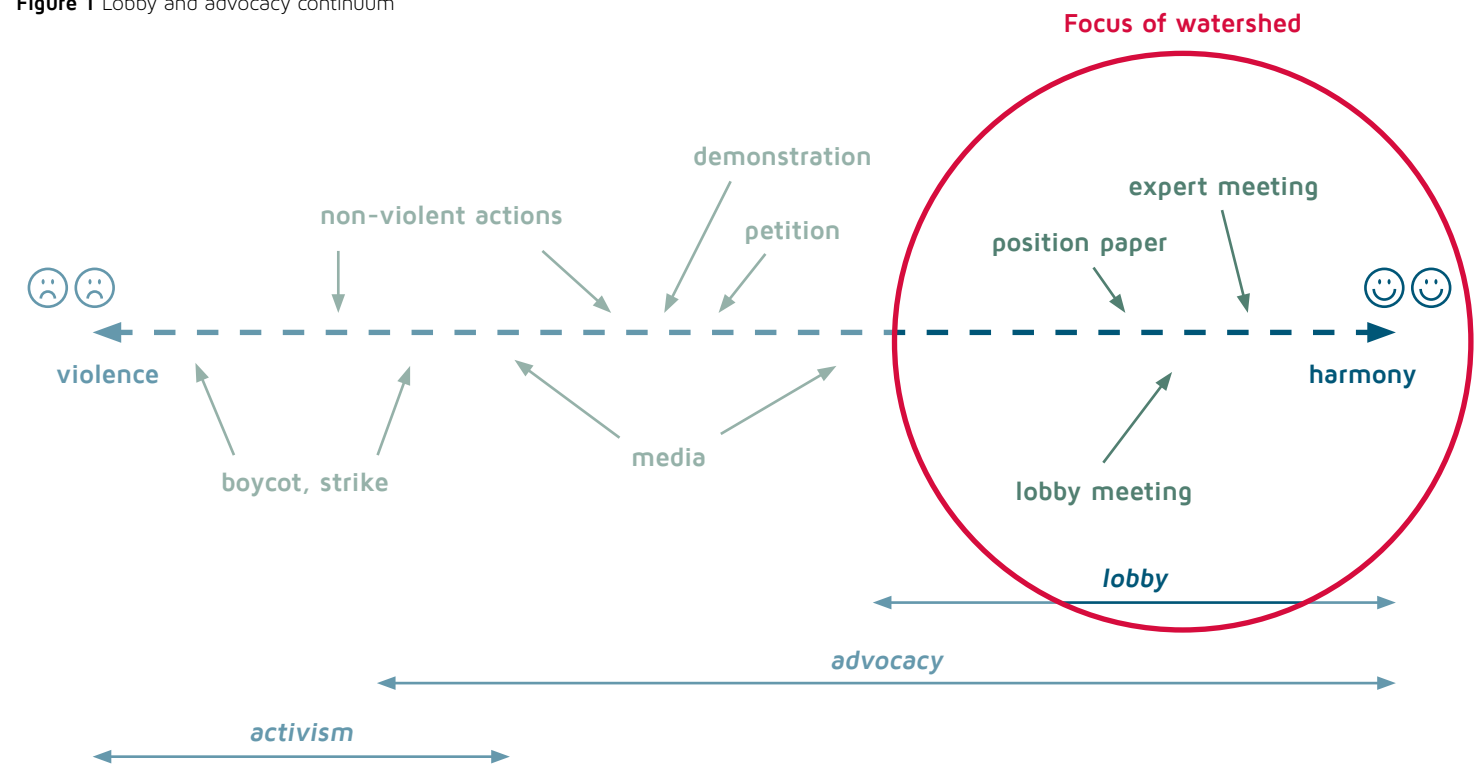
Reaching the unserved.
Gender and social inclusion is gaining importance. The Sustainable Development Goals call for providing WASH services to the 'bottom of the pyramid', and the consortium partners consider vulnerable groups a priority. *Watershed will work to ensure that issues of poverty, gender and inclusion are high on the agenda for advocacy and lobbying.*

Civil society organisations need capacity to influence WASH and WRM policy.
Many CSOs involved in advocacy and lobbying lack understanding of the policy process and have limited capacity to collect and evaluate evidence. Their ability to use both formal and informal policy processes, to coordinate with other stakeholders, to target the right audiences and to develop effective information products must be strengthened. *Watershed will work with partners to increase CSOs' capacity to analyse and use data to build effective evidence, to establish platforms to interact with target audiences, and to build relationships between stakeholders to be effective advocates for change.*

Figure 1 Lobby and advocacy continuum

Advocacy and Lobbying

Advocacy in Watershed means influencing decision makers by making the case for sustainable WASH services for all, including integrated management of water resources. It goes beyond campaigning: it includes finding, analysing and packaging evidence in an understandable form. Good evidence—whether qualitative or quantitative information or rigorous policy analysis—can inform sector debates on WASH and WRM.

Lobbying involves influencing decision makers by drafting position papers and organising meetings. Lobbying is sometimes associated with backdoor deals or improper pressure, but in Watershed, lobbying is open and transparent. It applies advocacy to the entities responsible for WASH and WRM (Figure 1). Some government departments in some Watershed countries already welcome a better-informed civil society that can support their appeals to politicians to increase resources for sustainable WASH services and WRM.

Together, advocacy and lobbying influence decision makers and practices to achieve better planning and resource allocation. Watershed is about strengthening the ability of civil society organisations and their networks to engage in the policy process and promote accountability. In Watershed's theory of change, stronger, more transparent CSOs with valid agendas can better engage with marginalised people and other groups that seek a seat at the table—and then government institutions will be more willing to listen.

Under certain conditions social accountability initiatives contribute to improved service delivery, better budget utilisation, greater state responsiveness, citizen empowerment and ultimately system change. (Adapted from McGee and Gaventa, 2011).

"We seek greater impact by turning this effort into a movement for change in WASH practice. Join us!"

Visit us at www.Watershed.nl

WATERSHED PARTNERS

IRC

IRC is a think-and-do tank. Our approach is different, and it is transformational. It involves everyone, in every part of the process, thinking and acting in new ways to find long-term solutions to the global crisis in water, sanitation and hygiene services. **www.ircwash.org**

Simavi

Simavi realises structural improvement to the health conditions of people in marginalised communities in Africa and Asia since 1925. Simavi invests in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) because these basic services are vital for people to be able to lead a healthy life, build a better existence and find a way out of poverty. **www.simavi.org**

Wetlands International

Wetlands International safeguards and restores wetlands for people and nature. We believe that this is urgent and vital for water security, biodiversity, climate regulations, sustainable development and human health. Wetlands International is a global not-for-profit network of 16 independent offices around the world. We bring together knowledge, policy and practice with a wide range of public and private partners. **www.wetlands.org**

Akvo

Akvo creates open source, internet and mobile software and sensors. It works with those that improve infrastructure and services, for disadvantaged populations. Akvo encourages and enables organisations to capture useful data in better ways, and provides training to improve skills in gathering, mapping and visualising data over time. Akvo helps partners integrate and analyse their data with our sources, to improve understanding of complex situations. **www.akvo.org**