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Adapting to climate change and fostering a low carbon water and sanitation sector

This briefing note explores how Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partners can address the risks and challenges presented by climate change through adaptation and mitigation measures. The SWA Framework offers concrete suggestions on how SWA partners can integrate climate change considerations into their planning and actions at global, regional and national levels.

About the SWA Briefing Papers

The SWA Briefing Papers analyse key development issues that are relevant for the partnership, exploring how these issues can be better understood and proposing some concrete action that can be integrated into the collaborative work of SWA's partners.

Why should SWA partners integrate action on climate change into our planning?

Sanitation, hygiene and water are critical for socio-economic development, food security and a healthy environment and are vital for reducing the global burden of disease and improving the health, welfare and productivity of populations. However, the science is clear that climate change is hampering the predictability of water availability and demand, affecting water quality, exacerbating water scarcity, and threatening sustainable development worldwide. This is compounded by a number of contributing factors, including persistent inequalities in access to public services, population growth, political uncertainty, migration, reduced soil health, accelerated groundwater extraction, widespread ecological degradation and loss of biodiversity. The sustainability of water and sanitation services and behaviours is already suffering, disproportionately affecting poor and vulnerable communities.

The [Paris Agreement](#) adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force in 2016. It addresses the need to limit the rise of global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century, as well as the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In 2015, countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with stand-alone goals (SDGs) on [water and sanitation](#) (SDG 6), and on [climate action](#) (SDG 13). The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#) was also adopted in 2015 at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan.

The implementation phase of the Paris Agreement focuses on Parties working to define and enact their [Nationally Determined Contributions](#). These, together with other key national and multisectoral strategies such as the [National Adaptation Plans](#), and [National Communications](#) are a powerful framework for laying out national priorities for national climate action, with the potential to guide priorities such as mitigation and adaptation interventions within the water and sanitation sector. They also provide a basis for investment plans that integrate climate vulnerability and resilience in the broader context of the SDGs and the Sendai Framework.

The SWA global multi-stakeholder partnership exists to mobilize its partners to collaborate on achieving the SDGs. For example, it can play a key role in connecting SDGs 6 and 13, while recognizing that the ability to meet these SDGs directly affects and is affected by almost all of the other SDGs, including poverty, food, gender and inequality. Furthermore, as the partnership is increasing its focus at country level, SWA can contribute to the success of the Paris Agreement by providing partners with a solid background on why and how countries can integrate mitigation and adaptation interventions related to sanitation and water.

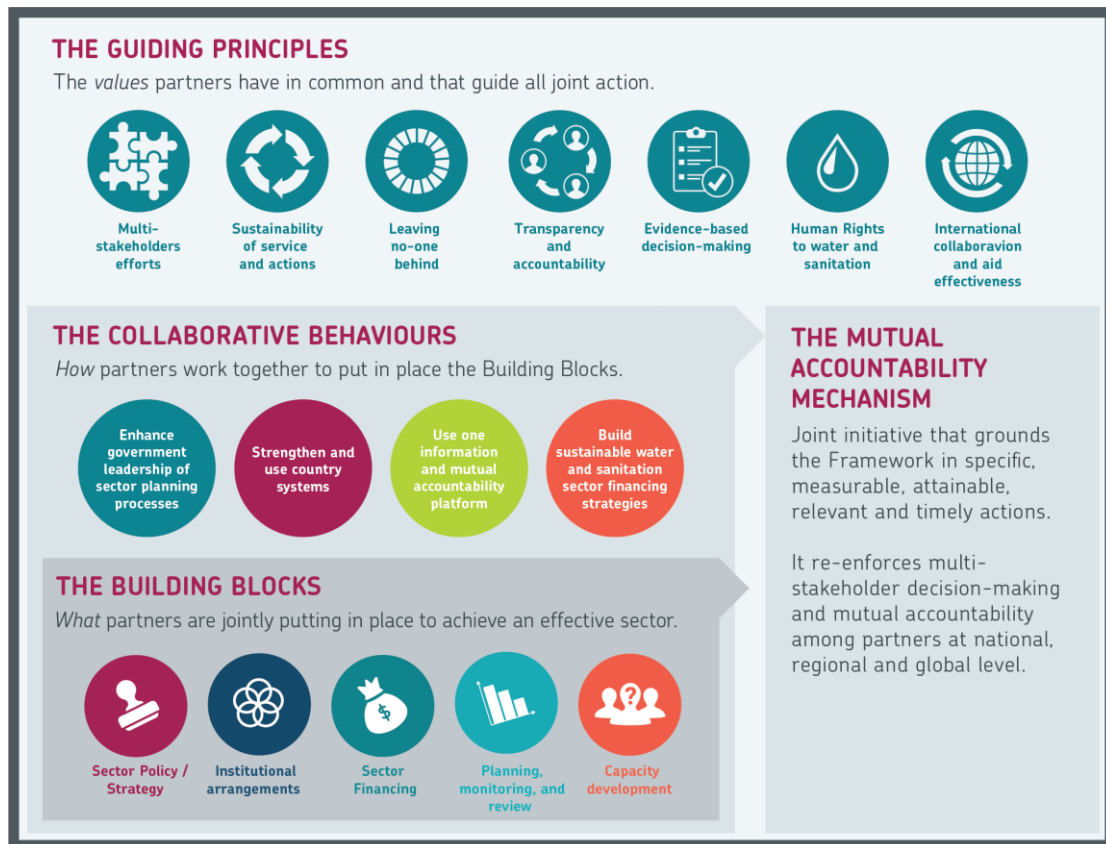
This Briefing Note constitutes a first contribution by the SWA Secretariat aimed at offering SWA partners information, as well as some concrete suggestions on steps they can take to incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation action into their planning.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector

The water and sanitation sector are already affected in many different ways by weather and climate-related phenomena such as variability, seasonality and extreme weather events. These often negatively impact the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of water and sanitation. Climate change puts additional stress on achieving public health targets. For example, if there is a decline in the availability of water supplies (e.g. due to lowering of water levels), people may be forced to drink contaminated water (e.g. untreated surface water), leading to an increase in waterborne diseases. The pollution of wells and flooding of latrines also increases the risk of a higher incidence of infectious diseases and contributes to stunting. In addition, a reduction in water availability makes hygiene practices more challenging, and behavioural change campaigns might not be effective in areas where access to water is increasingly constrained by the changing climate. A higher incidence of extreme weather events poses additional stress to the sustainability of both sanitation and hygiene practices. All of these impacts call for necessary climate adaptation approaches, which in most cases result in higher costs for delivering and maintaining climate resilient services. However, they also provide an opportunity for reviewing usage and consumption habits.

The water and sanitation sector can contribute to climate change mitigation to achieve a sustainable, low-carbon future. This is acknowledged in the SDGs and in responses to the Paris Agreement. However, there is more that can be done. Few institutions and actors responsible for updating and implementing national climate change strategies have fully taken water and sanitation-related mitigation opportunities into account. In this context, there are different mitigation strategies that could be considered for planning and management processes in the extraction, distribution and treatment of water and wastewater. These cover areas such as increasing energy efficiency (e.g. installing energy efficient pumps), production of renewable energy and recovery (thus reducing demand for fossil fuels) such as turbines placed along the water supply and wastewater systems for hydropower generation.

Integrating Adaptation and Mitigation into SWA’s Framework - Guiding Principles, Collaborative Behaviours and Building Blocks



The Sanitation and Water for All partnership developed the SWA Framework to catalyze effective multi-stakeholder collaboration in support of strong, resilient water and sanitation systems that can deliver lasting change. It is this framework for action which now puts the partnership in a position to help confront the challenges of climate change, by ensuring countries have the capacity to deliver and sustain services in the face of negative environmental impacts.

The Guiding Principles



1. Multi-stakeholder efforts

SWA's identity is based on the conviction that good public policies can only be designed and adequately implemented if they are the product of multi-stakeholder efforts to bring together governments, civil society, the private sector, development partners and academic institutions. Multi-stakeholder involvement makes climate adaptation and mitigation efforts more effective by bringing together water resources, water and sanitation service delivery, as well as health, food, energy and climate expertise. A political and institutional mapping exercise can be helpful to recognize which organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, are involved in water and sanitation and climate and to identify where the gaps are. It must be noted that in many cases Ministries with competencies in climate are not the same ones as those leading on water and sanitation. Expert consultations, or community meetings at the local level provide opportunities for stakeholders to discuss risks and uncertainties that could impact the water and sanitation sector.

2. Sustainability of services and actions

Many different factors, including political, institutional, financial, social, and environmental, affect the sustainability of services, and climate change poses an additional challenge. Untangling the climate component among all of these factors is difficult, but a growing body of evidence suggests changes in programme execution could strengthen the overall resilience of services to both climate risks and other pressures. In particular, ensuring that local decisions on water and sanitation infrastructure are informed by sufficient understanding of the resource base and climate risks, that best-practice design and construction standards are followed, and that service models are flexible enough to adapt to changing conditions, can go a long way to improving the sustainability of services.

Adapting to and mitigating climate change also provide incentives for the water and sanitation sector to improve its response to other pressures such as population growth and accelerating demand and competition for water. Indeed, the opportunity to refocus attention on ensuring the reliability and protection of drinking water sources and the safe disposal of waste through a wider sustainable management lens, aligns with the broad aspirations of SDG 6.

3. Elimination of inequalities and minimum standards of coverage, access, use and effectiveness of services

The most at risk and least able to deal with the impacts of climate change tends to be the most vulnerable populations. Many of the regions most at risk of droughts and floods already have very low levels of access to sanitation and water. A 2017 assessment by UNICEF estimated that nearly 160 million children live in zones of either high or extremely high drought severity and more than 270 million children currently live in extremely high flood prone zones in countries where less than half of the population has access to adequate sanitation facilities.

To support the elimination of inequalities and build climate resilience it is necessary that identified climate change risks are assessed and mapped and this information overlaid with the locations of disadvantaged communities and low levels of access to water and sanitation. Such mapping should reveal "hot spots" of high climate risks

linked to poverty and low levels of water and/or sanitation coverage and needs to be used to set or update priority interventions, appropriate to different contexts.¹

4. Transparency and accountability

The right to access to information is well established in international environment and human rights instruments, including in relation to climate change. The UNFCCC requires States to “promote and facilitate at the national and, as appropriate, at sub-regional and regional levels, ... public access to information on climate change and its effects.”²

In 2015, through the Paris Agreement, parties established an enhanced transparency framework that is expected to build mutual trust and confidence and promote effective implementation. By design, the enhanced transparency framework covers all substantive aspects of the Paris Agreement, including tracking progress of implementation and achievement of nationally determined contributions.

It is therefore important to ensure the active, free, and meaningful participation of rights-holders and other relevant stakeholders in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate policy at national and international levels. Decision-makers at national and international levels need to be held to account for the timeliness and quality of participatory processes, which at a minimum should require the publication of the outcomes of participation and the respects in which various stakeholders’ views were or were not taken into account.

The water and sanitation sector needs to be an integral part of those national and subnational climate sector-led processes, actively contributing with potential solutions and commitments to adapt to climate change and mitigate greenhouse gases emissions. Furthermore, there is a need for mechanisms to monitor climate change adaptation and mitigation national targets and international commitments as they relate to water and sanitation. SWA’s **Mutual Accountability Mechanism** multi-stakeholder decision-making platform could play a role, by making sure that at national, regional and global levels, commitments lead to specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely actions in the water and sanitation sector.

5. Evidence-based decision making

Although the precise extent of climate change might look uncertain, planners and policy-makers responsible for the water and sanitation sector must act now to build climate resilience and support adaptation and mitigation approaches.

Supporting the integration of climate adaptation and mitigation into water and sanitation strategies and plans needs to be evidence-based and informed by analyses of the impacts of climate change, including on impacts that have already been observed, as well as on the best information available from climate modelling and downscaling of climate projections. Such analysis should be looking across sectors to understand interlinkages.

¹ Note: A separate SWA Briefing Note exists on the topic of Inequalities, titled “[Leaving No One Behind](#)”. The reader is encouraged to seek further information there.

² See Article 6 “Education, training and public awareness” of the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)“.

Climate-informed decisions help to identify and prioritize high-risk locations and to target investments accordingly (as discussed above with SWA principle for the elimination of inequalities). Strengthening and supplementing situational analyses with climate change considerations help to ensure that strategies and plans are more responsive to the impacts of climate change.

6. Human rights to water and sanitation

As with all socioeconomic rights, the human rights to water and sanitation entail immediate and progressive obligations, and any climate change adaptation and mitigation responses must take these obligations into account.

Climate change makes the fulfilment of the rights to water and sanitation more difficult. Lack of sufficient access to water for personal and domestic use in areas affected by increasing incidence of droughts is not necessarily due to water scarcity, but is a consequence of power imbalances, poverty and inequality, and a failure of governments to prioritize water allocation for basic needs. However, actions towards the mitigation and adaptation required to address climate change also provide an opportunity to strengthen action towards the elimination of inequalities and the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation, and other related human rights, including housing, food, education and work.

7. International collaboration and aid effectiveness

The UNFCCC remains a primary international forum for climate negotiations. Non-UN forums and coalitions of non-state actors, such as private businesses and city-level governments are also contributing to international cooperation on climate change.

Such international cooperation has a role in stimulating public investment, financial incentives, and regulations to promote technological innovation. Policies that encourage better technologies that protect the environment can lower the cost of climate change mitigation and increase the chances of countries committing to reducing their emissions

While there are a number of new institutions focusing on adaptation funding and coordination, adaptation has generally received less attention than mitigation in international climate policy, despite potentially being relevant to a greater number of countries.

While climate finance is distinct from development finance in a number of ways, there are also some clear similarities, and lessons gained from the experiences of development cooperation should be useful as climate finance delivery mechanisms are established and evolve. In particular, the principles of aid effectiveness, as defined within the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, have highlighted important areas of responsibility. A major lesson from the aid effectiveness debate is that a key element to making best use of the funding available is a strong country-level finance management capacity that can manage complexities of the financing system as strategically and effectively as possible.

The Collaborative Behaviours



Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) has identified Four Collaborative Behaviours that, if adopted by countries and their partners, can improve the way that they work together to improve the long-term sector performance needed to deliver sanitation, hygiene and water for all, everywhere and forever.

1. Enhance government leadership of sector planning processes

Responses to climate change are transitioning from awareness-raising to the identification and implementation of actual country-led strategies and plans.

Government leadership is essential to advance adaptation and mitigation. Currently there is a disconnect between national adaptation and mitigation processes and national water and sanitation strategies. One way to overcome this problem is by educating government water and sanitation decision makers and other stakeholders in key climate concepts and processes, as well as identifying potential adaptation and mitigation interventions for their sector. Moreover, it is necessary to put in place inter-sectoral frameworks and tools that allow them to participate in the formulation and implementation of strategies that integrate climate with water and sanitation.

2. Strengthen and use country systems

As a first practical step toward strengthening their systems for climate adaptation and mitigation, it helps for countries to have a grounded and realistic understanding of how those systems are composed.

Good public financial management is a necessary ingredient for a strong country response to the impacts of climate change over the medium to long term. Strengthening country systems will also help countries access international financing for mitigation and adaptation in WASH. Access to climate funds will in turn ensure investments to develop adaptation measures, including building institutional capacity, thereby further strengthening country systems. It is a mutually reinforcing process.

When it comes to adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector it is important to consider national weather forecasting, as well as early warning and freshwater monitoring systems. Systematic observation of the climate is usually carried out by national meteorological centres and other specialized bodies, and freshwater monitoring is generally carried out by a public water resources management body. Since national monitoring systems form part of a global network, it is vital that there is as much consistency as possible in the way measurements and observations are made. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) performs a very important role in this respect.

The better the information available, the more the climate and its impact on freshwater ecosystems can be understood and the more accurately future conditions

can be assessed, at the local, regional, national and global levels. Strong partnerships between meteorological services, water resource specialists, and the water and sanitation sector are vital so that they can work together to interpret what the latest measurements mean for water and sanitation services.

3. Use one information and mutual accountability platform

Reliable data, including evidence of observed and projected climate impacts, how the most vulnerable are affected, and critical reflection are crucial for making decisions about where to invest, how to sustain and improve water and sanitation services, and for understanding which policies and strategies work. This is especially necessary for adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector, but there remains a widespread lack of capacity for monitoring, inconsistent or fragmented gathering of data, and limited use of information management systems, which have been found to impede effective decision-making in sector planning, resource allocation and policy development.

Developing and strengthening a platform for information sharing and mutual accountability requires an inclusive system for measuring sector performance against nationally established goals and targets, including those related to water and sanitation that are set in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

As mitigation and adaptation to climate change continue to be tested and scaled up in the water and sanitation sector, a framework that enables multi-actor involvement in a structured process of knowledge creation, transfer and mobilization is vital. This information can be reviewed when the sector convenes in joint sector forums, to allow all partners to demand and demonstrate mutual accountability for sector progress. Building national and local capacity to monitor sector performance, including how resilient the water and sanitation sector is to climate change is a key component of strengthening country systems.

4. Build sustainable water and sanitation sector financing strategies

Under the Paris Agreement, developed countries committed to deliver at least \$100 billion from public and private sources annually between 2020 and 2025 for mitigation and adaptation projects. However, countries are lagging far behind these commitments, and there is no common formula as to how much of this sum individual countries should provide, or indeed what the contribution of public and private finance should be.

Development banks, aid agencies, foundations, and a few commercial and private sector sources have tended to make up the bulk of what is generally considered climate finance. In addition, multilateral institutions such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund have been used to directly fund climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. Regional, national and bilateral climate finance initiatives represent an emerging source of funding in developed and developing countries, although they remain focused predominantly on mitigation.

Discussions around funding for climate change activities have largely been centred on how much money is or ought to be available. The quantity of funding is certainly important, especially in countries and regions that are particularly vulnerable to climate change. However, the quality of projects funded is just as important. Well-defined, targeted financing processes that show a clear climate rationale versus business as usual can help mobilize new resources by signalling to public and private sector audiences why and how to ensure water and sanitation climate resilience. In addition, investments need to be prioritized in environmentally

sustainable and climate resilient infrastructure that promotes women's health, well-being, livelihoods and productivity and generates employment for women.

Finally, while climate finance is growing, there is concern that the most vulnerable countries are not 'climate finance ready' and need considerable institutional support to effectively access, spend and manage funds. Supporting the poorest countries to access finance for climate change adaptation and mitigation activities is another opportunity for advancing water and sanitation climate resilience at country level.

The Building Blocks



The SWA Building Blocks address key areas for strengthening integrity in the WASH sector.

1. Sector policy / Strategy

There should be a strategic framework in which environmental and climate change mitigation and adaptation policies and strategies are aligned with those of water and sanitation, and vice versa, with the aim of guiding programmes and interventions towards building more resilient services.

Checklist

- a. Does the National Adaptation Plan recognize water and sanitation as a priority sector?
- b. Do national water and sanitation development policies /strategies incorporate issues related to climate change (including through shocks and sudden events and also slower onset events), and are they aligned with national mitigation and adaptation priorities?
- c. Do national water and sanitation strategies include sustainable use of water and promote increased distribution efficiency, water savings and water reuse, and generally "low regret options" that would be desirable even without climate change?
- d. Do drought and flood management strategies exist in the country, and do they prioritize the use of water for human consumption over other uses in the event of scarcity?
- e. Does rigorous climate information exist in the country and is it available at the appropriate time and geographical scales to inform water resource planning in the medium and long term? Is it effectively used to prioritize interventions in the water and sanitation sector?
- f. Do environmental policies integrate the principles of responsibility, participation, gender, protection of ecosystems, the rights of nature and

the protection of the most vulnerable groups from the impacts of climate change?

2. Institutional arrangements

2.1 Coordination

There should be an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism between departments responsible for environment, water, agriculture, energy, and water and sanitation.

Checklist

- a. Is climate change integrated into water and sanitation sector dialogues, joint sector reviews, information exchange and coordination meetings, thus strengthening collaboration between departments and agencies?
- b. Are the country Focal Points of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, National Communications Processes to the Convention, National Adaptation Processes and National Commitments to the Paris Agreement, coordinated with governmental water and sanitation departments for the establishment of sectoral adaptation and mitigation priorities?
- c. Is the water and sanitation sector consulted, and does it actively participate in national adaptation and mitigation processes?
- d. Are coordination mechanisms and cross-border agreements for shared water resources in place that facilitate climate adaptation and disaster reduction?

2.2 Arrangements for the provision of services

Water and sanitation service delivery models should be resilient to climate change.

Checklist

- a. Are there technical guidelines and specifications for mitigation and adaptation to climate change of water and sanitation technologies?
- b. Are water and sanitation service delivery systems developed based on risk analyses that address climate change and are appropriate to different contexts, minimizing population exposure to potential failures arising from climatic threats?
- c. Are Environmental and Social Standards established both for existing services as well as for future interventions?

2.3 Accountability and regulation

There should be in place governmental systems to monitor climate change mitigation and adaptation national targets and international commitments related to water and sanitation.

Checklist

- a. Are there clear and effective mechanisms for citizen participation (e.g. through civil society organizations) in national risk management, mitigation and adaptation processes?
- b. Are there functional internal control mechanisms, such as state audits or transparency commissions, that verify compliance with national

objectives and international commitments (e.g. Paris Climate Agreement, Sendai Framework, SDG 13)?

- c. Is there an institution with clear functions for monitoring progress towards meeting national and international climate change related objectives and commitments? Is this information made public?
- d. Does the national agency that monitors sectoral objectives and commitments (risk management, mitigation and adaptation) conduct regular reviews? Is this agency empowered to act as a valid arbitrator?
- e. Are there incentives to invest in early warning, change adaptation and mitigation technologies in the water and sanitation sector?

3. Sector financing

National priorities set for risk management, adaptation and mitigation within the water and sanitation sector need to find adequate financing mechanisms.

Checklist

- a. Is there a comprehensive assessment of the cost of climate change adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector under different scenarios (e.g. prolonged droughts and more frequent floods)?
- b. Is there sufficient capital expenditure, with budget lines for adaptation and mitigation, and emergency preparedness, to respond to international commitments and national targets in the water and sanitation sector?
- c. Are there sufficient resources and capacity to meet national objectives and international commitments in climate change risk management, adaptation and mitigation?
- d. Do funding criteria give weight to disaster risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation to be part of sustainable water and sanitation programming that is resilient against extreme and recurring weather events and fosters community climate resilience?
- e. Has the water and sanitation sector agreed on an action plan with national environmental focal points on how to secure funding from multilateral funds for climate change (e.g. Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, Global Environmental Facility)?
- f. Has an institutional analysis been carried out of financing options (e.g. cash transfers) and intermediaries to support sanitation systems, particularly for the poorest households, where reinvestment to adapt to climatic conditions and/or reconstruction after extreme weather events is necessary?

4. Planning, monitoring, and review

2.4 Planning

National water and sanitation plans should be based on a preliminary risk analysis that includes a climate component.

Checklist

- a. Has the water and sanitation sector, together with local leadership, conducted and/or updated a national risk analysis that considers different climate hazards, the level of exposure of infrastructure and population, as well as vulnerabilities of the sector in relation to climate change?
- b. Are identified climate change risks mapped together with disadvantaged communities and low levels of access to water and sanitation? Is this mapping used to set or update priorities, objectives and adaptation and mitigation activities appropriate to different contexts?
- c. Do water and sanitation planning processes offer flexibility to integrate identified new risks and update priorities based on new national targets and international adaptation and mitigation commitments?
- d. Has the private sector been engaged to support the opportunities provided by climate change adaptation and mitigation?

2.5 Monitoring and review

Monitoring systems used in the water and sanitation sector should be able to measure improvements resulting from the introduction of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Checklist

- a. Do water and sanitation plans and strategies incorporate monitoring systems that include indicators to measure the effectiveness of prioritized adaptation and mitigation measures?
- b. Are the indicators to measure the level of adaptation and mitigation in the sector linked to existing databases (national or international)? Are information collection methods easy to use in a situation of limited resources?
- c. Is there capacity to monitor slow onset and sudden climate events? Are there early warning systems to provide timely information to decision makers?
- d. Are there impact assessments of previous water and sanitation interventions that include an analysis of how climate threats have affected the achievement of the desired impact and objectives?
- e. Are there research programmes that provide information on the factors driving demand for sanitation, including the influence of climate risks (e.g. flooding) on people's willingness and long-term capacity to (re)invest in sanitation?
- f. Are mechanisms in place to capture, share and disseminate lessons learned from the implementation of national pilot adaptation and mitigation experiences in the water and sanitation sector?
- g. Are water resource and climate monitoring systems in place at the watershed level?

5. Capacity development

The institutions working with water and sanitation need to have the capacity to address the integration of climate change adaptation, mitigation, and risk reduction in the sector and the ability to look at how water and sanitation connects to other sectoral plans.

Checklist

- a. Is there a comprehensive capacity development plan for strengthening adaptation, mitigation and risk assessment knowledge in the water and sanitation sector based on a needs assessment (e.g. meteorological data, modelling, groundwater trend analysis)?
- b. Do all levels of government have the technical capacity to address risk management, adaptation, and mitigation in water and sanitation (e.g. to gather information on the impact on the most vulnerable and the rates of progress)?
- c. Are local markets resilient to climate impacts and able to accommodate demand for services during crises, whether slow-onset or sudden events?
- d. Do appropriate technology and solutions exist to increase surface or underground water storage, to increase efficiency in distribution systems and to reuse water?
- e. Is there capacity for effective implementation of water and sanitation climate adaptation and mitigation efforts by implementing partners?

Note: The [WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool \(WASH BAT\)](#) follows a similar structure of building blocks and can facilitate the analysis of the above proposed checklists and questions. These have been developed considering existing analysis criteria for Emergency, Fragile or Climate Change-Affected Contexts.

Integrating adaptation and mitigation into SWA's global and regional activities

The partnership works at international, regional and at national levels, and SWA partners can adopt different actions at each level to advance adaptation and mitigation. This will include integrating approaches to advance this agenda into its webinars, High-level Meeting ministerial dialogues and sessions at international and regional conferences.

Mutual Accountability Mechanism

A significant part of the Mutual Accountability Mechanism is to support SWA partners in developing the necessary multi-stakeholder platforms to have meaningful discussions about how SWA partners can hold each other to account.

The platforms will not only enable SWA partners to achieve the commitments that are decided upon for the Mutual Accountability Mechanism, but also to facilitate the realization of the SDGs and other national priorities, including the fast-evolving areas of climate adaptation and mitigation. In this respect, and as discussed earlier in this Briefing Note, the SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism represents an important opportunity for the water and sanitation sector to make commitments and monitor progress for adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector linked to other global, regional, national and sub-national climate led processes.

High-level Meetings

Sanitation and Water for All's High-level Meetings are an opportunity to discuss specific issues that are of interest to partners. Exploring how to strengthen partners' work, exchange good practices and identify bottlenecks with respect to adaptation and mitigation should be integrated into all discussions at the High-level Meetings. Review of climate financing commitments and progress towards Nationally Determined Conditions, highlighting the impact on the most vulnerable and the rate of progress, could be included in the High-level Meetings.

Knowledge management, webinars, the SWA tools portal

Sanitation and Water for All is promoting knowledge management tools, including webinars and a tools portal, and is setting up a platform for the Mutual Accountability Mechanism, so that partners can share information about the commitments they have made and whether they are being met. All knowledge management tools will have specific information about how to integrate adaptation and mitigation into activities.

Sanitation and Water for All will also continue peer-to-peer learning between countries and organizations and knowledge exchange on adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector. This will provide opportunities to share good practices, including on how to develop policies and financing measures to advance this agenda (also including cross-sectoral linkages).

To support this, Sanitation and Water for All will seek to provide capacity building/training based on collective expertise with and to its partners, on adaptation and mitigation, potentially through 'climate advisors'.

Steering Committee Meetings

Sanitation and Water for All's global policy is directed by the Steering Committee. There is an opportunity to discuss issues relating to the integration of climate adaptation and mitigation into partners' activities through increasing the Steering Committee members understanding of why advancing this agenda is critical for the partnership, and what this requires of the Steering Committee in terms of direction. It is also important to consider the participation of country environmental focal points that oversee the coordination of national adaptation plans and commitments to the Paris Agreement in Steering Committee meetings.

UN processes and High-Level Political Forum

United Nations climate change conferences have grown exponentially in size over the past two decades and are now among the largest international meetings in the world. The intergovernmental negotiations have likewise become increasingly complex and involve an ever-increasing number of officials from governments all over the world, at all levels, as well as huge numbers of representatives from civil society and global media.

These conferences are the foremost global forums for multilateral discussion of climate change and serve as the formal meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) with two main purposes:

1. To review the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement; and
2. To adopt decisions to further develop and implement these three instruments.

Sanitation and Water for All partners should take the opportunity, based on respective comparative advantages, to influence the agenda, negotiations and political priorities, as well as other key United Nations processes, including the High-level Political Forum.

Integrating adaptation and mitigation into national level activities

Sanitation and Water for All partners must enhance their inclusive policies and budgets in order to advance on adaptation and mitigation. Below are some approaches that SWA partners could consider:

1. **Participation:** Strengthening the participation of water and sanitation specialists in climate driven national processes, and the participation of climate experts in water and sanitation working groups, joint sector reviews, partnership meetings, high-level meetings, raising their capacity to understand the impacts of climate change on the sector and across the broader water resources, agricultural and energy sectors.
2. **Evidence:** Support building the evidence on how climate change impacts water and sanitation services and behaviors and include a “climate lens” on impact assessments of previous interventions, including an analysis of how climate threats have affected the achievement of the desired impact and objectives.
3. **Monitoring:** Develop climate indicators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact on equality of measures introduced for adaptation and mitigation and their contribution to the overall sustainability of water and sanitation services (versus business as usual development).
4. **Access to information:** Ensure access to information on proposed adaptation and mitigation measures is comprehensible and actionable for stakeholders, and available to all.
5. **Policy, strategy, and planning:** Encourage all SWA country partners to support the development of water and sanitation climate risk assessments that inform sector and cross-sector policies and strategies and develop technical standards and governance arrangements for adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector.
6. **Accountability:** SWA partners collaborate to bridge the climate, water and sanitation agendas and integrate adaptation and mitigation into commitments for the Mutual Accountability Mechanism.
7. **Decentralization and local authorities:** Working more closely with the ministries or departments of local government to promote information-sharing and capacity-building at local level within government on climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives in the water and sanitation sector. At the same time promote bottom-up informed policies so that local approaches for adaptation to climate change are considered in national climate adaptation and mitigation processes, as well as water and sanitation sector strategies. Creating stronger local structures to respond to demands from specific climatic contexts and allocating resources that are specifically aimed at fostering climate change adaptation and mitigation.

8. **Financing:** Creating specific budget lines that are used to address climate adaptation and mitigation and supporting capacity development on innovative climate financing, including risk management instruments that do not directly transfer money, but mitigate risk such as guarantees and insurances. Looking at generating additional funding for the sector by tapping into climate finance and promoting the importance of presenting strong adaptation and mitigation proposals.
9. **Visibility:** Providing arguments at high level for water and sanitation to be prominent in adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Conclusion

Climate change and the global climate crisis exacerbate existing challenges, making the provision of services increasingly difficult. These greater challenges demand new strategies.

The coordination of climate and water and sanitation agendas is bidirectional. On one hand, climate policy makers need to better understand the important role water and sanitation can play in mitigation, and importantly the need to adapt to climate change, including the most often forgotten areas of sanitation and hygiene. Indeed, water and sanitation need to feature more prominently in National Adaptation Plans and can contribute to national commitments made to the climate Paris Agreement. Water and sanitation policy makers also need to understand how climate processes work and integrate climate considerations into national water and sanitation policies.

While new and innovative climate financing approaches have recently come into play, the water and sanitation sector is lagging behind in tapping into it. This is mostly due to the current lack of understanding on the part of water and sanitation stakeholders of how climate financing schemes work and to make a strong climate rationale for water and sanitation.

Advancing adaptation and mitigation in the water and sanitation sector is an issue of social injustice, in which marginalized and poor people suffer the most despite generating the least greenhouse gas emissions, and a moral imperative for the sake of future generations. A unique opportunity exists to transform existing governance and management systems, and to increase coherence of the climate, water and sanitation agendas, to bring about a sustainable future for all. The SWA global multi-stakeholder partnership is strategically positioned to mobilize its partners to advance strongly towards adapting to the impacts of climate change and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

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