# Thematic Concept Paper: Water for Health

Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation (SDG 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 17) including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

### Key Messages

**Drinking water and** sanitation are human rights, and access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services is vital to health, development, and social and economic progress

#### In 2020:

- 2 billion people still did not use safely managed drinking water
- 771 million did not use even basic drinking water services
- almost half of the world's population, 3.6 billion people, used sanitation services that leave human waste untreated, threatening human and environmental health; 494 million people are still practising open defecation

- A lack of WASH causes 1.4 million deaths annually.
- Poor WASH is the root cause of cholera.
- Repeated bouts of diarrhoea can contribute to stunting.
- WASH is key to combatting Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)
- Water is the habitat to a number of vectors that carry disease, such as malaria and dengue.
- WASH services reduce the need for antibiotics, and hand washing is essential for infection-prevention at health facilities.

### Linkages with health

There are examples of significant progress

Many of the countries that have made rapid gains in improving WASH have done so as part of **nation building**, committing to sustainable and safe WASH as part of the social contract between governments and people.

Globally, at least a quadrupling of current rates of progress on water, sanitation and hygiene is needed

.... to meet the SDG targets and ensure people have access to WASH services **no matter where they are** – home, healthcare facilities, schools, workplaces, places where food is prepared, markets, refugee camps and prisons.

Government leadership and willingness to drive change is key

There is an urgent need to dramatically increase political commitment to safely managed WASH, to strengthen the governance and institutions required to deliver these services, and significantly increase the financial resources available.

It is critical to strengthen the national and local systems required to deliver reliable, resilient and inclusive WASH services at scale

...services that can attract funding from users, government budget allocations, and private finance.

Working in partnership with governments, development partners should increase investments in the WASH sector, seeking ways to build systems, capacity and institutional strength.

### Financing

#### **Governments** should

- develop clear policy objectives to guide funding and financing decisions, develop costed funding and financing strategies, and increase public spending on WASH, recognizing its value as a public good.
- encourage and support improvements in WASH service providers' financial performance, while development partners should support these efforts.

### **Development partners** should

 increase investments in the WASH sector, seeking ways to build systems, capacity and institutional strength, working in partnership with governments.

## Data and Information

#### **Governments** should:

- support the institutionalization of data collection and monitoring within national systems
- Use consistent data and collection methodologies
- Prioritise the collection of data relevant to equality
- Develop new sources of data
- Make information public to increase transparency and accountability

### **Development partners** should:

 change the manner in which their results are measured

## Capacity Development

#### **Governments** should

- Build robust and competent institutions and a capable and motivated workforce
- Build capacity in technical areas but also competence in long-term planning and budgeting, improved cost recovery, revenue generation and financial sustainability.
- Professionalize WASH service delivery
- Strengthen capacity to integrate climate resilience and mitigation into planning, designing and delivering WASH services.

### Innovation

### **Governments** should:

- encourage innovation and experimentation through supportive government policy and regulation, accompanied by rigorous monitoring and evaluation.
- Regularly update regulations to reflect the availability of new technologies and service delivery models;
- Encourage innovation in methodologies and approaches, as well as in technologies
- Being proactive in setting forth clear specifications and targets for innovative products and methodologies.

### Governance

#### **Governments** should:

- strengthen existing institutions, fill institutional gaps
- establish a stable regulatory environment that protects all consumers
- clarify institutional roles and responsibilities, making clear which delivery models are sanctioned;
- facilitate collaboration across ministries and sectors, and between actors.
- create a policy environment that supports higher service levels

### **Development partners** should:

- adopt a systems strengthening approach
- join forces with other stakeholders in support of government leadership.

## Guiding Questions

- What are the data gaps that are holding back planning, investment and monitoring of progress towards the SDGs?
  What support do governments need to fill them?
- How can we build champions for water, sanitation, hygiene and wastewater treatment in national and local government and use them to accelerate action?
- What kind of **policies** for WASH and wastewater treatment are required to drive action, investment and accountability? Are "stand alone" policies the most effective?
- What should the role of development partners and the private sector be in supporting skill-building and institutional strengthening?

## Guiding Questions

- How can we work across government ministries and departments (health, agriculture, water resources) to optimize WASH investments and ensure they contribute to health, food security, equality, and nation-building?
- What concrete actions can we take to build trust and transparency in the WASH sector, ensuring participation and consultation of all stakeholders?
- What is the best way to **track action** over the next eight years what are the most important actions to track for governments and development partners?