WASHing away inequalities: partnering to finance and achieve the water, sanitation and hygiene targets of the Sustainable Development Goals

The upcoming SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting (SMM) will be convened in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 4-5 April 2019 to support the achievement of the water, sanitation and hygiene-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be held immediately after LatinoSan.

It will bring together ministers responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene and senior government officials from different regions and development levels, as well as leaders from other stakeholders, including civil society, private sector, donors, development banks, UN agencies and academia.

Unique in the sector, the SMMs are the culmination of robust ongoing strategic dialogue at country level, involving multiple stakeholders bound together by the belief that good governance and mutual accountability are key to achieve water and sanitation for all, always and everywhere.

The 2019 SMM will have 'Leave No One Behind' as its overall theme and has a single, high-level objective:

To increase awareness and understanding of 'Leave No One Behind', its fundamental relationship with WASH, and its implications for leadership, partnership, planning and finance

This we be achieved through dialogue, knowledge sharing and learning, involving all interest groups and stakeholders.

To achieve its purpose, the SMM has been designed to deliver four outcomes:

- Leave no one behind. Develop a common understanding of what leave no one behind means, the scale of inequality in WASH, its root causes and its impact.
- Leadership. Highlight the critical role of leadership to focus attention and resources on leave no one behind.
- Finance. Establish how national sector finance strategies can be developed to maximise their impact on eliminating inequality.
- Planning, monitoring and review. Demonstrate how the application of the SWA Framework of Guiding Principles, Collaborative Behaviours and sector Building Blocks can address inequality in WASH.

The SMM will comprise plenary sessions, ministerial dialogues and a technical meeting, and will be chaired by the Honourable Kevin Rudd, SWA's High-level Chair.

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The 2019 SMM Preparatory Process

Before the event, SWA partners will be engaged in a dedicated 6-month preparatory process that includes the joint selection and prioritization of existing commitments, derived from national plans developed under government leadership. Ministers will be encouraged to table specific commitments developed with in-country partners in line with SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism.

Starting in November 2018, the SWA will facilitate the preparatory process which will build on national processes and dialogues to foster strategic engagement around inequalities, leadership and the financing required to eliminate inequalities.

The main purpose of the preparatory process is to ensure ministers arrive with thorough understanding of (i) the progress their countries have made towards the achievement of national WASH targets and (ii) the extent of inequalities in service provision.

SWA partners, led by governments, will work together to:

- Strengthen analysis and multi-stakeholder dialogue on the status of the sector regarding leave no one behind, the leadership needed to catalyze progress and the financing required to remove inequalities
- Build political will and engagement among decision-makers (i.e. sector and finance ministers, and other key decision-makers) to agree the necessary priorities and commitments to eliminate inequalities
- Jointly select and prioritize existing commitments focusing on those that will improve equality in access to WASH services –this can include or focus on various aspects of the SWA Framework and should be embedded in existing national processes.

The process will make use of SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism, and will be informed with evidence, for example, submitted to GLAAS as part of the 2018/2019 survey.

Outcomes of the preparatory process will include:

1. A country statement which includes the status of progress with emphasis on inequalities, priorities for the country and, where possible, the commitments jointly agreed by the government and partners; and
2. A ministerial briefing which will include a few slides for the minister's intervention in ministerial dialogues.

SWA will facilitate follow-up activities to support a continued robust engagement of partners at country, regional and global levels.