

MID-TERM REVIEW OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL'S MEDIUM- TERM STRATEGIC PLAN, 2012-16

Executive Summary
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Executive Summary

I. Introduction

WSSCC is a global multi-stakeholder membership organisation with partnerships in more than 20 countries and members in more than 150 countries. It stands upon 25 years of extensive experience in water, sanitation and hygiene issues at community, national, regional and international levels. With the global target for sanitation continuing to be unmet as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) period drew to a close, sanitation was clearly recognised as a national priority in WSSCC's priority countries in the last decade. Programming efforts seeking to address regional disparities in sanitation and hygiene found greater resonance among organisations at global and national levels. Behaviour change was commonly identified as a key challenge to realising improved sanitation outcomes in these countries, with Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) as the predominantly recommended national strategy for promoting behaviour change in sanitation and hygiene. With the major sector gap in the last decade relating to increasing resources for practical action, sector advocacy placed a strong emphasis on actions to mobilise resources from national government and donor constituencies. In addition, sector advocacy revolved broadly around the inclusion of WASH goals into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to bring the *rights to water and sanitation* into the debate and the realisation of these rights in practice. Increasing sector learning and knowledge based on programmatic experiences was also a desired outcome and priority in the sector. WSSCC's strategies through the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) and Sanitation Leadership Trust Fund (SLTF) programmes in this Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) responded to this broader sector context seeking to accelerate progress against MDG targets in sanitation and hygiene and recognition at the close of the MDGs that inequalities are an important obstacle to the achievement of global development goals.

II. Evaluation Objectives

During 2015, the WSSCC commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of its MTSP 2012-16 to assess its progress against intended results in the MTSP. The MTR was designed to contribute to organisational learning as well as to meet the accountability requirements of WSSCC's Steering Committee and donors. The MTR mainly considered strategies and activities undertaken during the period 2012-2014 for assessment of WSSCC's performance against its MTSP, but the biennial work plan for the period 2015-16 was also reviewed to examine any directional shifts in WSSCC's strategies. Timelines for the review (including document reviews, stakeholder interviews and analysis) extended until February 2016, effectively covering aspects of work planned and undertaken during the entire MTSP period. The MTR employed the OECD-DAC framework and criteria for the evaluation. Formative methods of evaluation were used where necessary, including articulating an organisational theory of change. Particular attention was given to areas where learning and its application seemed to be most valuable. The key findings from the evaluation are summarised below.

III. WSSCC's strategy during the MTSP, 2012-16

The scope and focus of the MTSP 2012-16 concentrates its energy and resources on equitable sanitation and hygiene for the poor and neglected people in Africa and Asia, particularly in countries with the highest sanitation and hygiene needs and where it is possible to make a useful impact. WSSCC seeks to address the gaps in sanitation and hygiene access from the demand side – through its GSF – by targeting behaviour change among communities through “*collaborative, demand-led approaches to achieve results at scale*”. Through the SLTF, WSSCC's MTSP mandates it to focus on the supply-side,

pursuing strategies on knowledge creation and dissemination and targeted advocacy, with the broader aims of raising awareness, influencing policy agendas and mobilising stakeholder commitments necessary for realising improved outcomes in sanitation and hygiene with an emphasis on those who are left behind.

IV. Global Sanitation Fund

Currently, GSF has on-going programmes in 13 countries in Africa and Asia; six countries were added during this MTSP period and there are three GSF pipeline countries where Country Programme Plan (CPPs) are in various stages of development. WSSCC management indicate that there is a high level of interest among other countries to be included in the GSF, and frequent requests are made to begin GSF support in new countries.

Based on data reported, the programme demonstrates positive results on its primary outcome of achievement of ODF communities and increased “Access and Use” of sanitation facilities and improved hygiene practices. GSF’s progress against its primary outcome of access and use can also be inferred through the strength of its monitoring systems and evidence on sustainability of reported results. GSF commissioned an assessment of its M&E approaches in 2015 as part of its system of continuous improvement. The assessment points out the need to improve existing monitoring, verification and reporting systems so as to enhance the accuracy and reliability of results reported by country programmes. GSF also undertook a sustainability assessment of select country programmes which indicates the existence of slippage in GSF-supported areas, thereby raising questions around the sustainability of results achieved. While these issues plague WASH investments in general, GSF needs to make improvements to track slippage and promote sustainability.

GSF contributions to the MTSP outcome area of “Equity” cannot be clearly established at the close of the MTSP as GSF-supported country programmes do not explicitly target these vulnerable groups nor do they track related indicators. More could be done to collect disaggregated data and track inequities in sanitation, in order to improve planning and implementation towards achieving equitable outcomes.

GSF’s effectiveness in operationalising its learning and knowledge management strategy is demonstrated by the cross-country learning exchanges and in its efforts to build technical capacities of its national partners to deliver CLTS strategies. It is also evident in commissioned independent evaluations on a number of programme design elements, learning from which is expected to improve future programming. However, the knowledge component within GSF has not yet realised its potential to add value to the sector. WSSCC has not fully harvested lessons and evidence emerging from GSF programme implementation in spite of identifying key themes for knowledge building in its 2012 Learning Guidelines for purposes of advancing sector knowledge and using the evidence for advocacy towards better policies or practice.

Findings from the GSF Value for Money assessment indicate that the programme demonstrates improved cost-efficiencies in achieving its key outcome of ODF conversion – moving triggered communities to ODF status to the extent that fixed place defecation or basic sanitation is achieved. This is an encouraging finding that could allay wider concerns around the efficiencies and effectiveness of GSF. The study also notes that GSF’s cost efficiencies reduce if the intervention seeks to shift communities from fixed-place defecation or basic sanitation to improved sanitation as per WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme JMP guidelines. As access to improved sanitation is noted

to be an enabling factor for sustainability of outcomes, more clarified understanding of sustainability and the role of improved sanitation in this is necessary.

WSSCC's management response to major findings from the GSF's Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) was shared with the MTR team and published, along with the MTE synthesis report, on WSSCC's website. In this response, WSSCC acknowledges the programme challenges outlined above and notes that active steps are underway to address the above challenges through the GSF 2016 work plan.

V. Sanitation Leadership Trust Fund

Knowledge and Learning

The MTR finds positive contributions from WSSCC in generating new evidence, debate and recognition particularly around sanitation and hygiene issues focused on women and marginalised groups. Research studies commissioned by the WSSCC during this MTSP are filling evidence gaps within the WASH literature and are used in sector-wide advocacy processes, particularly relevant in the post-2015 context with its focus on equality and non-discrimination in WASH. There is mixed evidence on other activities undertaken through this strategic component.

Progress on a Community of Practice (CoP) in promoting knowledge sharing among sector professionals is modest to date. In addition to building partner capacities in CLTS strategies, WSSCC – through its equality and non-discrimination programme – invests in building stakeholder capacities on MHM. In the absence of systematic monitoring of the quality and impact of training, it is not possible at this point to assess how effective WSSCC has been in building capacity in MHM. That said, given the modest scale and piecemeal nature of activities that have been undertaken during this MTSP, the overall impact is unlikely to be significant.

The MTR finds that synergies between departments from knowledge and learning standpoint can be strengthened as evidenced in the insufficient prioritisation of Knowledge and Involvement outcomes (Outcomes 3 & 4) within the GSF programme.

Advocacy and Influence

WSSCC's diverse efforts in advocacy and communications suggest that WSSCC's advocacy role has the potential for contributing to wider SDGs. At the global level, WSSCC's support to sector communications historically and also in the SDG context are found to be valuable. Its advocacy response and contributions in the area of sanitation and menstrual hygiene in particular are well-recognised. At the regional level, WSSCC's financial/technical support to platforms such as AfricaSAN and SacoSAN and its contributions alongside other actors to regional dialogue on equality and non-discrimination, with an emphasis on gender (including MHM as an entry point) and marginalised groups, are well-recognised. Its support, along with WaterAid in West Africa, to increase media coverage of WASH issues in the region through the WASH Journalist Network is well-acknowledged. But sustainability of the latter initiative in the absence of continued programme support is less clear.

The gains and influence at regional levels do not necessarily translate to national levels. The MTR finds that WSSCC's efforts in national advocacy processes are more fragmented, with contributions deriving from varied sources, including activities undertaken by WSSCC's three departments and National Coordinators. There is mixed evidence around specific initiatives – for example, the WASH Ambassador programme did not scale or yield positive results in bringing about policy influence as anticipated. An

integrated approach through knowledge generation, evidence-based policy advocacy & capacity-building appears to be at the core of WSSCC's work in the area of equality and non-discrimination. This integrated approach is apparent through the UN-Women programme, which provides evidence of strong, laudable efforts in terms of in-country activities undertaken towards advancing the right to sanitation for women and girls, with a particular focus on menstrual hygiene. While elements of this knowledge-based advocacy approach has been valued by some stakeholders (e.g. research outputs filling evidence gaps in sector and generated evidence is relevant to policy), it is difficult to assess whether or to what extent this approach has been effective because WSSCC did not develop a detailed strategy during the MTSP period that articulates the desired results.

VI. Memberships and National Coordinators

Membership and National Coordinators (NCs) are identified as central to the achievement of MTSP outcomes in translating WSSCC's global and regional advocacy to the country level. However, the membership strategy has not been integrated into programming as intended in the MTSP. A delayed start to the Strategic Engagement Plans, designed by the NCs to take forward the country initiatives meant this could not anchor any aspect of SLTF/GSF programming until 2015-16. In-country activities are taking place through the NC constituency, which plays an important role advancing WSSCC's agenda and priorities at a national-level. While it is hard to evaluate WSSCC's contributions through this constituency because activities are undertaken in conjunction with other WASH actors, meaningful assessment is made more difficult by the lack of a strong results framework or attention to documenting examples of change. WSSCC's financial allocations to NCs to carry out their work and the types of activities pursued through this constituency do not reflect a high strategic orientation by WSSCC towards engagement at a national level, particularly through the NC initiative.

VII. Governance and Management

WSSCC committed itself in the MTSP to results-based management, which embraces the alignment of budgets, organisational structure and staffing, as well as activities and outputs, to the achievement of intended outcomes and uses knowledge from monitoring and evaluation in new rounds of planning and other decision-making. WSSCC plans strategically on a 5-year cycle. Work plans are tailored more precisely to the volume of funding anticipated, but annual reports do not clarify how interventions in these plans are formulated or how budgets are allocated to planned interventions by departments. The evaluators were not able to document a systematic approach to project identification and work planning, such as through use of problem analysis, theory of change and M&E information. Risk identification and assessment is an essential element in planning, and could be better incorporated in the planning frameworks.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks are now part of overall planning but are not yet sufficiently operationalised with the result that, among other things, data in SLTF are not collected routinely on outputs or outcomes in a consistent manner. This is understandable because WSSCC as an organisation only began to apply M&E systematically after 2014. This early work should provide strong foundations for further development. Since 2015-16, WSSCC has begun to incorporate more rigorous review of performance and results into its programme cycle – both at the organisation level and below. The momentum for this needs to be maintained. WSSCC's semi-annual reports show distinct improvement in the last 12 months in terms of results orientation, with the M&E unit providing technical guidance and promoting a culture of reporting against results.

WSSCC's experiences to date suggest that inefficiencies have affected its performance in certain areas during the MTSP. These are primarily evidenced through time delays in carrying forward planned activities and programmatic underspend. Although the staff has now increased substantially, staffing constraints in some departments are frequently cited to have affected the performance of operating divisions at various times in the MTSP. The MTR also finds certain structural challenges within the Secretariat, including functional overlaps, role of the knowledge and research functions, location of the M&E unit and implementers of "advocacy" programming synergies across departments. The new strategy will provide an opportunity to align the structure and resources of the organization with the intended results.

The MTSP also intended synergies between GSF and WSSCC's other departments of Networking and Knowledge Management (NKM) and Advocacy and Communications (A&C) on aspects of systematic lesson learning and knowledge sharing, and advocacy for improved stakeholder commitments for sanitation and hygiene. There is limited evidence to be found on this front. This issue also came up strongly through the staff survey conducted for the MTR. Staff survey responses indicate a climate in WSSCC where most staff are committed to the success of the organisation, but perceive significant problems in the way it is managed, particularly with respect to internal communications and incentives for collaboration. The fact that they are prepared to speak out about both the positive and negative aspects of the organisation, as they perceive them, is encouraging.

From a governance standpoint, the membership constituencies are cited as a strength. However, the manner in which they function contributes to a number of governance problems including: (1) lack of risk oversight, (2) insufficient exercise of performance and financial accountability. Governance structures and processes have not kept pace with the growth and evolution of the organisation, and a fundamental review is overdue.

The UNOPS hosting arrangement appears to have improved significantly during the MTSP, although its potential for support for human resource and risk management was not being fully leveraged.

VIII. Recommendations

Programme Strategy (GSF, Knowledge and Learning, Advocacy and Influence)

The recommendations in this section are organised along the OECD-DAC criteria.

1. WSSCC should undertake a participatory and iterative exercise to produce a Theory of Change that determines the linkages between desired outcomes at various levels and strategies to achieve them. This will include developing country specific TOCs for each country where WSSCC is present, describing the logic, assumptions and linkages behind all of WSSCC's country engagements. See also related recommendations 4, 5, 6. **[Relevance, Effectiveness]**
 - a) For GSF, this should involve engaging with the GSF's in-country partners and NCs in all GSF countries to review the CPPs' context, articulate assumptions and a country-specific Theory of Change. In the countries where programme implementation efforts and progress towards results is particularly lagging, this exercise should result in an adjustment of approaches, targets and milestones, where necessary, in order to hasten progress and achievement of results

2. Even as GSF continues on its current and modest trajectory of programme expansion in existing and new countries, more importantly, it needs to prioritise strengthening its M&E framework, consolidating learning and systematically harvesting lessons from existing country programmes and use non-GSF learning to address existing gaps emerging from GSF programme evaluations so as to enhance GSF programme design and effectiveness. **[Effectiveness]**
3. All GSF-supported programmes should develop a clarified understanding of slippage and sustainability drivers, strengthen mechanisms for monitoring slippage and invest in strategies to promote achievement of sustainability in outcomes **[Sustainability]**
4. Equality and non-discrimination are critical and cross-cutting concerns in the SDG context and WSSCC must seek to embed these principles across its programmatic areas of work in sanitation and hygiene. To this end, WSSCC must define clear objectives, strategies, outcomes, targets and indicators relating to these principles within its programmes **[Relevance, Effectiveness]**
 - a) Within GSF, this would involve defining results that it is envisaging in terms of equality and non-discrimination, including appropriate indicators within the GSF Results Framework and revising the CPP guidelines to include equality and non-discrimination as key components. GSF must develop clear protocols for identification of vulnerable and marginalised groups in areas of operation and clarify its strategies and activities to bring about envisaged results and operationalisation of its results framework around this principle
 - b) Within existing countries of operation, GSF must seek to document programme's contributions to equality and non-discrimination concerns and harvest knowledge and lessons around the programme's impact on vulnerable and marginalized groups
 - c) Besides GSF-supported programmes, WSSCC is still experimenting with ways and means of engagement and collaboration in its work on equality and non-discrimination. As WSSCC believes it has unique contributions to make in this area of work, an important next step would be to articulate a theory of change to clarify and elaborate its objectives, assumptions and expected results from this line of work. This must be complemented by clearly resourced strategies that WSSCC will pursue to realise the desired outcomes. This will also include clarifying the role of research, advocacy and capacity-building as potential strategies to influence policy and practice and drive desired outcomes in equality and non-discrimination
5. WSSCC must develop a cohesive knowledge and learning strategy. This strategy must hold relevance for both internal programmatic learning as well as for broader sector learning based on lessons from WSSCC's programme implementation. To this end, **[Relevance, Effectiveness]**
 - a) GSF must prioritise knowledge and learning efforts around pressing sector issues relating to sustainability and equality in particular and those first identified in the 2012 Learning Guidelines. To this end, GSF must harvest and document lessons from its

practice that expand sector understanding of challenges and drivers in the achievement of sustainability and equality in outcomes

- b) Sector knowledge, policy and practice can also benefit tremendously from an understanding of key drivers and inhibitors for adoption of behavior change interventions. GSF can help expand this knowledge base by synthesising design elements that contribute to programme results within its own country programmes
 - c) Strategy for a research portfolio in equality and non-discrimination must include well-defined goals and target audience as well as identify potential linkages and synergies with GSF where possible
 - d) WSSCC must align the CoP knowledge platform closely with its GSF and equality and non-discrimination programming. This platform could be one tool to help WSSCC operationalise and achieve strategies for knowledge sharing and dissemination with the wider sector. It could also help serve advocacy and capacity building outcomes around WSSCC's equality and non-discrimination programming and GSF learning priorities discussed above.
 - e) WSSCC should develop advocacy strategies and plans associated with its knowledge efforts. See related recommendations 5 and 6.
6. Active engagement of government partners to institutionalise WSSCC's key knowledge and advocacy messages into national policies, technical guidelines, manuals and regulations is an important way to demonstrate the uptake of WSSCC's knowledge and advocacy messages and in turn their likely sustainability. To this end, [**Relevance, Effectiveness**]
- a) WSSCC should develop a cohesive global and regional advocacy strategy to be aligned with the new strategic plan.
 - b) The global/regional advocacy strategy needs to provide a framework for national level advocacy by identifying the key themes and issues that WSSCC will want to speak on, will want to mobilise networks and partnerships around, and will want to prioritise for knowledge-building, lesson-learning and capacity-building. The global/regional advocacy strategy needs to clearly establish how it will link to, draw from and be coordinated with national level advocacy that WSSCC's NCs, GSF and other programme partners will undertake to ensure that global/regional political commitments are translated into real investments, appropriate policy and practice changes at the national levels. See also related recommendation 7
 - c) WSSCC also needs to define clear targets and indicators for its key advocacy themes and track progress towards these targets at national, regional and global levels

7. WSSCC should review how it might bolster its national presence for purposes of more effective national-level influencing and achievement of results around its key programme areas. Three approaches might be considered: [**Relevance, Effectiveness**]
 - a) Consider having one strategic programme in the country, involving GSF and its infrastructure and NCs and their partnerships and ensuring that WSSCC Secretariat engages in a country through SEP, avoiding parallel/disconnected country engagement processes from different departments
 - b) bolster the resources and capacities of the NC constituency such that their overall national engagement is more closely aligned with WSSCC's work and advocacy messaging. Contributions from this constituency should be clearly seen as elevating the in-country visibility and added value of WSSCC.
 - c) Given the limited resources and the small size of the Secretariat, scale back current programmatic ambitions and instead focus on a few, high priority countries, where it can undertake deeper policy engagement, support local systems and demonstrate local responsiveness and accountability.
8. WSSCC needs to infuse substantive rigor, time and resources during the planning, and design, implementation and review phases of its country-based programmes in order to prevent time delays and cost over/under spend at the time of implementation and in turn generate improved efficiencies and value for money from WSSCC's input of financial and technical resources into programme activities. This might also necessitate reflection on and revisions to existing incentive structures of in-country partners during the formative phase. [**Effectiveness, Efficiency**]
9. There is a need to review existing budgeting and financial reporting systems, including review of existing chart of accounts, and assumptions underpinning cost classifications and allocations, to enable clarified understanding of expenditure and broader value for money represented by programmes [**Efficiency**]

Monitoring and Evaluation

10. Based on its Theory of Change, WSSCC should prepare and follow a common set of definitions for key indicators against defined results at the organisational level. Some of these in turn could be proposed as indicators to be used across the sector.
11. A set of learning questions, mostly deriving from the Theory of Change, but also including cross-cutting themes such as equality, relevance and coherence, should be developed to prioritise and steer M&E, and complementary research, throughout the strategy period. Every indicator in the new results framework should be accompanied by a clear plan for mobilising data collection and analysis.

12. Some outcomes in WSSCC's Theory of Change will be better reflected through qualitative indicators. Data collection and analysis for some of these indicators will require case study approaches which need appropriate skills and resources.
13. Internal results-focused review should be institutionalised at different levels and across all programmes throughout the organisation.
14. WSSCC's evaluation strategy should be reviewed particularly in the light of absorptive capacity and balance across the portfolio of work. A systematic approach to using evidence from independent evaluations (especially programme evaluations) for planning and designing or course correcting ongoing programmes needs to be internalised.
15. WSSCC should continue its efforts to strengthen and streamline results reporting through more explicit reference to indicators.

Governance and Management

16. The new strategy should include a map of what an integrated Results Based Management (RBM) system would look like in WSSCC, with clear resourced strategies for ensuring all the key components are in place with realistic timelines and with appropriate prioritisation. Particular attention should be paid to the planning of evaluable results at all levels and to the planning and implementation of monitoring
17. WSSCC need to address the functional overlaps and mismatches head-on in the new strategy by applying comprehensive results-based planning – including budgeting - and management methodologies. Form should follow function. Agreement on WSSCC's overall theory of change and strategic results framework should lead into structural re-organisation and budgetary re-alignment designed to achieve those results in an optimal manner. Given the need for greater collaboration and fluidity between the different WSSCC functions, these two aspects of re-organisation should avoid excessive rigidities. Moreover, mechanisms should be put in place that enable the organisation to be more responsive to changes in function during the life of the new strategy.
18. There is a need for a fresh initiative from senior management to engage with staff through a participatory process designed to agree the areas where action should be taken, and feasible steps identified, to improve staff relations and put in place processes for maintaining that improvement. An annual staff survey conducted by a third party would be a useful means of monitoring progress going forward.
19. WSSCC need to develop a risk management strategy in line with its new strategic plan. A risk register and risk management plan would be central parts of the strategy, and should be regularly reviewed by WSSCC management and the WSSCC Steering Committee as part of their governance function. Both the identification and assessment of risks and their monitoring and management should operate at appropriate levels, not only at the highest.

20. The work of the Task Team set up to explore other services UNOPS could offer WSSCC, including support for staff management and development and risk management needs to be accelerated.
21. All WSSCC task teams should have clear terms of reference - conferring their legitimacy - timelines and accountabilities. Membership of task teams should be reflected in staff Performance and Results Assessments (PRAs)
22. There is an urgent need for a fundamental review of WSSCC's governance structure.