

Public Services

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Open Government Partnership Global Report

DEMOCRACY BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX

Open
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Partnership



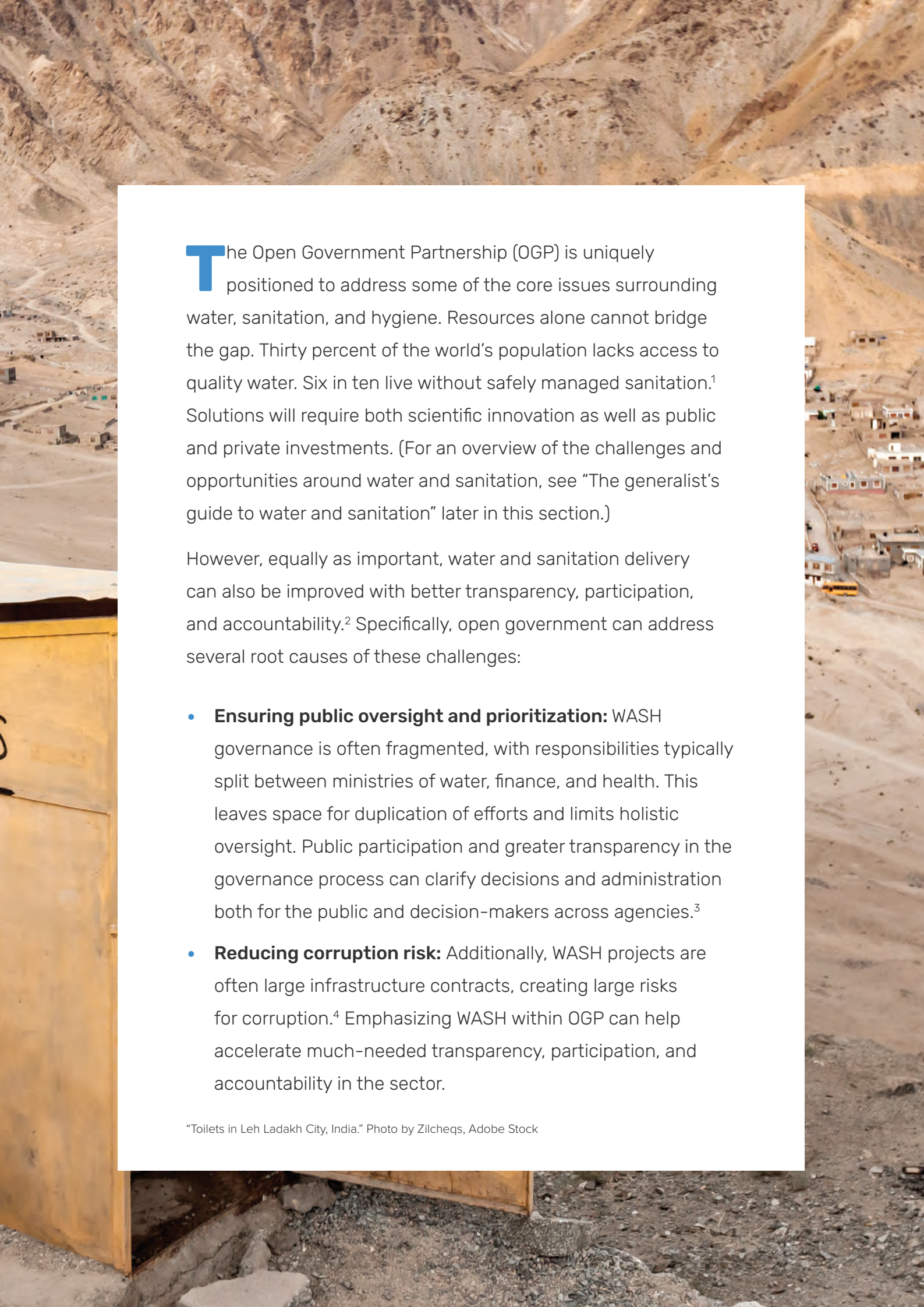
Key points

Improving open government yields significant dividends to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Healthy, engaged communities strengthen infrastructure, create stability, and drive growth that creates more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. To these important ends, OGP members have made progress in these areas.

However, despite their successes and the many larger benefits they represent, these elements of public services remain some of the least explored areas in OGP action plans, with only nine members currently implementing relevant commitments. Based on analysis of third-party data, OGP members can build on existing work and continue to improve access and quality of services with open government commitments reflecting the following:

- **Data on the policy area.** Most OGP members collect and publish point-of-service and household data. However, this data is not disaggregated for smaller geographic units, is not interoperable between locations, and licenses tend to not allow for re-use, creating a mosaic of data that is often difficult to integrate and act upon.
- **Information on the policy process.** While most OGP members have reporting plans in place for sanitation and drinking water, financial expenditure data is not accessible in a large number of countries and monitoring systems are often ineffective.
- **Participation and accountability.** While most OGP members have participation and institutions for accountability in place across WASH subsectors, very few have robust participation and less than half report having accessible complaint mechanisms for the subsectors.
- **Spending on vulnerable populations.** Most OGP members have plans to address access for vulnerable populations, but very little money is spent or tracked to reach these populations relative to their size.



An aerial photograph of a village in a mountainous region, likely Leh, Ladakh, India. The village is built on a hillside, with small, simple houses and a few larger buildings. The surrounding landscape is rugged and mountainous, with some roads and paths visible. The overall scene is arid and high-altitude.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is uniquely positioned to address some of the core issues surrounding water, sanitation, and hygiene. Resources alone cannot bridge the gap. Thirty percent of the world’s population lacks access to quality water. Six in ten live without safely managed sanitation.¹ Solutions will require both scientific innovation as well as public and private investments. (For an overview of the challenges and opportunities around water and sanitation, see “The generalist’s guide to water and sanitation” later in this section.)

However, equally as important, water and sanitation delivery can also be improved with better transparency, participation, and accountability.² Specifically, open government can address several root causes of these challenges:

- **Ensuring public oversight and prioritization:** WASH governance is often fragmented, with responsibilities typically split between ministries of water, finance, and health. This leaves space for duplication of efforts and limits holistic oversight. Public participation and greater transparency in the governance process can clarify decisions and administration both for the public and decision-makers across agencies.³
- **Reducing corruption risk:** Additionally, WASH projects are often large infrastructure contracts, creating large risks for corruption.⁴ Emphasizing WASH within OGP can help accelerate much-needed transparency, participation, and accountability in the sector.

“Toilets in Leh Ladakh City, India.” Photo by Zilcheqs, Adobe Stock



“Public water point, Yemen.” Photo by Foad Al Harazi, World Bank

- **Identifying drivers of poor quality and access:** Poor water quality and quantity can result from lack of information about its safety, what (or who) is causing the problem, or both. Open government can help ensure that the public has access to information on ambient and point-of-service water quality, as well as information on the parties behind decision-making and, in some cases, its pollution or overuse. For example, “pollutant release transfer registers,” which publish the release of toxins from private facilities, have been shown to result in diminished stock prices for bigger polluters.⁵
- **Official accountability for decisions and actions:** While many issues of poor access or poor-quality services are not the result of malfeasance, accountability can help drive performance. Ensuring officials have the duty to respond to public inquiry and follow up on disclosure has been shown to improve quality over time.
- **Improving equity:** In some cases, a participatory approach can augment scientific or majoritarian decision-making. Recent evidence from Burkina Faso suggests that, in a democratic country, augmenting majority-based voting processes with face-to-face input from underrepresented groups can foster more equitable results.⁶
- **Improving legitimacy of decision-making:** Recent evidence from Costa Rica shows that communities with stronger public water committees and clear rules for tariff collection have better performance in terms of both providing water to rural communities and recovering costs.⁷

Overall, meeting the needs of communities around the world will require a greater level of ambition than has been seen to date. Given the importance of WASH, as well as the unique role that OGP can play in supporting the development and achievement of more ambitious commitments, WASH has been identified as a priority theme within OGP.

Open government approaches to improve water and sanitation fall into a few categories. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the quality of service through greater accountability for results. This happens through improving the data that assist decisions, improving the openness of decision-making itself, and improving the mechanisms for participation and accountability of decisions.

1 Data for WASH decision-making: At a minimum, OGP countries should have open data on basic public services. This data provides transparent information on the level of service being provided, as well as the distribution of those services. Increasing the transparency of information on aspects of service such as equity (including rural versus urban, gender, and economic status), service quality and reliability, sustainability of systems, and change over time are all critical to understanding WASH services. Specific binding constraints within OGP countries are discussed later in the section, “Data for WASH decision-making.”

2 Information about the policy process: This focuses on opening the decisions that determine WASH services. Access to information can be improved for: (a) planning and investment decisions; (b) budgetary data (including tariffs, subsidies, and taxes); (c) publishing service levels and making them more transparent; and (d) procurement processes applications. A discussion of the state of access to information efforts is below.

3 Participation and accountability: Commitments here may range from participatory budgeting to the introduction of accountability measures, such as citizen monitoring. Importantly, these interventions can also evaluate how different populations, including men and women, access and use water and other municipal sanitation services. These may range from one-off interventions to incorporating the public into formal decision-making. Examples include:

- **Municipal water services:** Citizens and civil society can help hold service providers accountable.
 - Regulatory bodies: Larger urban areas will typically have some sort of oversight structure, whether from a regulator or water services board. In these cases, participation can include notifying the oversight body of any breaches of the service agreement and ensuring that proscribed action takes place. In many places, citizens have formal roles on the public utility commissions and commissions are required to hold public meetings and hearings. In this way, communities can support monitoring and decision-making, both on behalf of a service provider and in order to hold the service provider accountable. For example, the government of Honduras committed to establish local supervisory units and accountability as part of the Water Regulatory Authority.⁸

- Report systems and citizen science: Several water authorities, including in the UK and Kenya, have mobile-phone based leak reporting tools. These tools allow communities to report directly to a utility to accelerate response. In other cases, such as citizen science efforts in the United States, community monitoring is used to track regulatory compliance by utilities.

- **Rural contexts:** In these instances, the service provider is often a community water committee—a team of volunteers responsible for ensuring the operations of a hand-pump or small, piped scheme. Participation can include ensuring that the water committee holds regular meetings with the community with space to express grievances. Another option could be using regular water committee elections to incentivize management that responds to community needs.

- **National scale:** Participation at the national level is especially important in shaping policy and legislation, as well as influencing budgeting. National ministries (i.e., Ministry of Water, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Finance) ultimately determine what laws guide water and sanitation services and, critically, how funding is allocated. Civil society can play a key role in helping design water and sanitation policies that meet the needs of communities and participatory budgeting can help move investment to places where it is most needed. (See the box title, “Lessons from reformers: Uruguay’s National Water Plan,” for an example of a government taking this approach with their National Water Plan, which was part of its OGP action plan.)



The generalist's guide to water and sanitation



"Public fountain in Marrakesh, Morocco." Photo by Martn, Adobe Stock

Few policy areas present the potential for wide-ranging impact as water access, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). In 2015, 30 percent of humanity had no access to safely managed drinking water services. Sanitation was even more urgent, with more than 30 percent of the world lacking even basic services.⁹

Improved household access to safe water, dignified sanitation, and good hygiene habits improve health, and with important additional effects.

- **Disease burden:** Access to WASH can reduce diarrhea risk by between 19 and 50 percent, depending on estimates.¹⁰ Other health-related impacts include reduced stunting¹¹ and decreased incidence of neglected tropical diseases.¹² Collectively, improvements to WASH could reduce as much as 10 percent of the global disease burden.¹³
- **Economic growth and stability:** The impacts of improving WASH access go far beyond improving health outcomes. Clean water and healthy workers are key drivers of economic growth, and this effect is not limited to developing countries.
 - a In East Asia, every dollar invested in drinking water and sanitation yields a return of US\$5.30.¹⁴
 - b At the same time, in the United States, every job created in local water and wastewater industries creates nearly four jobs nationally.¹⁵
 - c There is growing evidence that improving WASH also improves education,¹⁶ aids peacebuilding,¹⁷ and improves watersheds and biodiversity.¹⁸
- **Gendered impact:** Every aspect of WASH disproportionality impacts women, in all stages of their lives.¹⁹ Women and girls are most often responsible for collecting water for their family, collectively spending over 200 million hours every single day carrying water.²⁰ Aside from losing productive time, long treks to collect water put women at significant risk of violence and injury.²¹ For young women at school, the insufficient hygiene and sanitation facilities force many girls to miss school during menstruation.²² In addition, because women most often are the primary caretakers, any improvement to WASH also benefits families. Consequently, there is a critical need in data collection and publication to monitor, assess, and address these issues.

The need for basic water and sanitation services goes beyond the household. In both developing and developed countries, the larger community faces critical gaps as well.

- **Schools:** Nearly one-third of schools worldwide lack basic drinking water access and roughly the same amount lack sufficient sanitation facilities.²³ This problem is not limited to developing countries, with major drinking water issues in public schools in the United States²⁴ and Canada.²⁵

- **Healthcare facilities:** Based on a survey of more than 50 low- and middle-income countries, nearly 40 percent of healthcare facilities lack even basic access to water services.²⁶
- **Workplaces and other non-household locations:** International data suggests that other non-household locations actually lag behind households in access to quality water and sanitation services. This is especially acute in temporary use settings, mass gatherings, and dislocated populations.²⁷

Universal goal: Not just for developing countries

International policy and research now clearly recognize that gaps in water and sanitation services are not solely the challenge of developing countries. Their reach is much more pervasive, impacting economies of all sizes.

- **Universal goal:** In a stark transition from the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) acknowledge the critical nature of clean water challenges and have created a dedicated water goal (Goal 6), reflecting both WASH and watershed management. As another departure from the MDG era, the SDGs are designed as a “call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income.”²⁸
- **Sanitation in wealthy countries:** One particularly challenging area for more industrialized countries includes wastewater treatment. Many large cities around the world use combined sewage-stormwater systems, which pump untreated wastewater directly into rivers, streams, and ponds when stormwater overwhelms treatment capacity. In Canada, over 100 million cubic meters of untreated sewage and polluted stormwater flowed directly into waterways in 2016.²⁹

- **Equity:** Advanced economies must also address major challenges in terms of equity of WASH services, with lower income, indigenous, and otherwise marginalized communities facing unique challenges. In the United States, nearly 1.6 million people lack water and sanitation services, with African-American families twice as likely as white families to live without modern plumbing.³⁰ Flint, Michigan, where water quality challenges have made headlines around the world, has the highest poverty rate of any city in the United States. In Flint, in particular, these issues tie directly to concerns of access to information and accountability as insufficient water quality data and accountability of decision-makers have delayed restoring safe water to the community.³¹

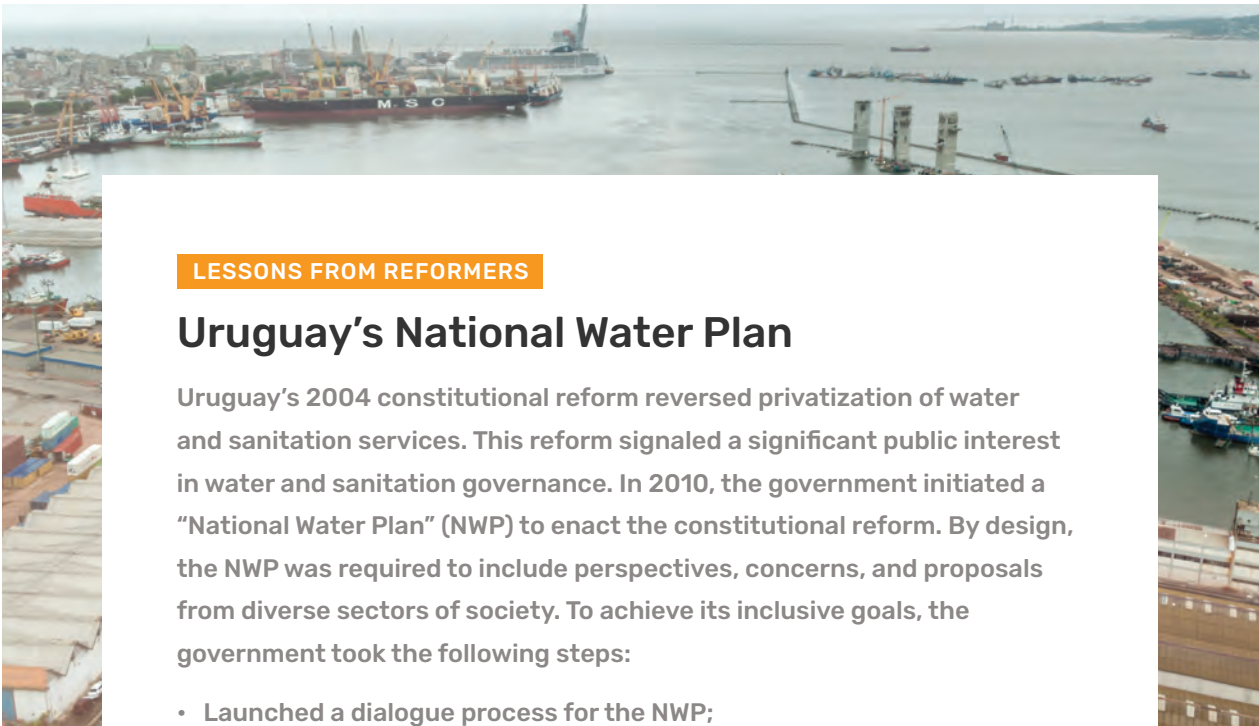
A differentiated approach for sub-sectors

In framing the issue, it is important to distinguish between water, sanitation, and hygiene. Solutions must reflect the diversity of institutional and cultural norms across communities and borders.

For example, water enables all other rights; without water, one cannot vote, own property, or live.³² In addition, the right to water is also considered by some to be a right itself, affirmed through national law, such as in the South African constitution. And while it may be a public good in many places, people also continue to get their water from private providers or common pool resources.

While sanitation also enables other rights, both it and hygiene are more frequently treated as private, decentralized responsibilities, making governance even more fragmented. Nonetheless, governments play an important role in providing education, monitoring, regulatory guidance, and financial incentives. These different responsibilities shape the role that open government can play in each sub-sector.





LESSONS FROM REFORMERS

Uruguay's National Water Plan

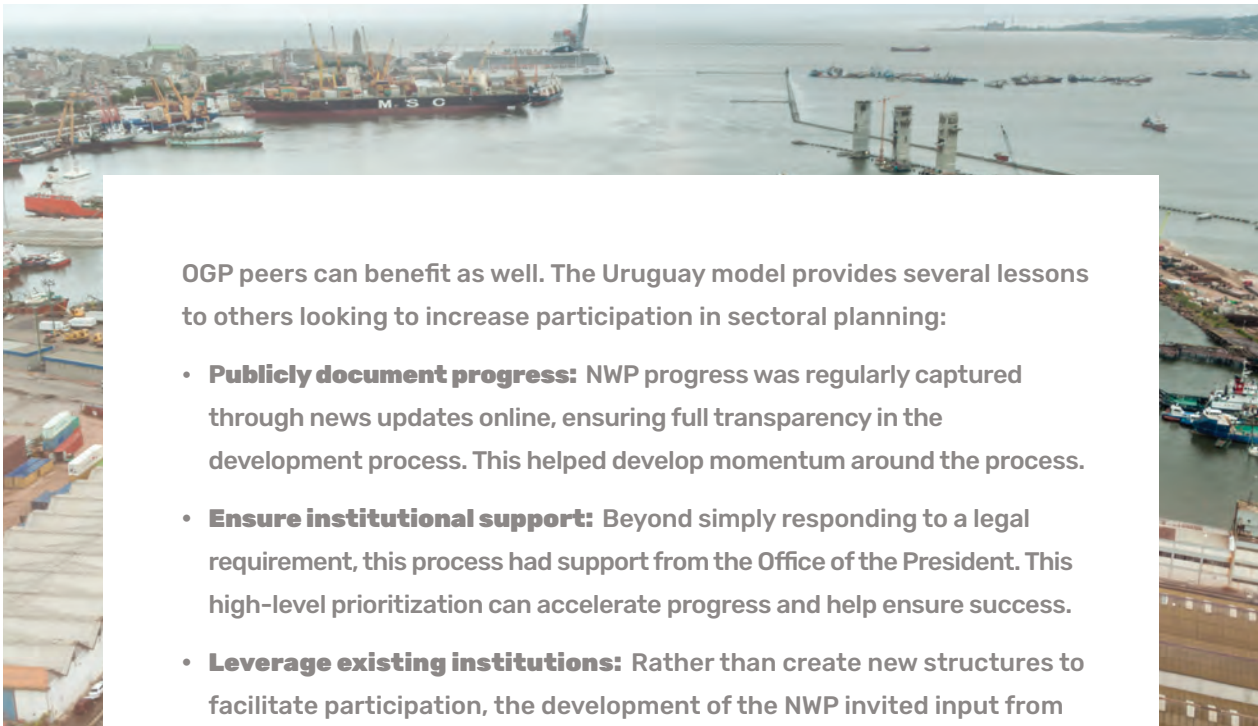
Uruguay's 2004 constitutional reform reversed privatization of water and sanitation services. This reform signaled a significant public interest in water and sanitation governance. In 2010, the government initiated a "National Water Plan" (NWP) to enact the constitutional reform. By design, the NWP was required to include perspectives, concerns, and proposals from diverse sectors of society. To achieve its inclusive goals, the government took the following steps:

- Launched a dialogue process for the NWP;
- Held formal discussions about the NWP as required by the relevant laws;
- Created informal spaces for discussion with at least four public meetings and publication of the discussion findings online; and
- Raised awareness by introducing the NWP as part of World Water Day.

Uruguay's concerted approach to broader community engagement worked. The planning process has seen significant progress over the last several years:

- More than 1,500 people participated in formal discussions around the country, including officials, parliamentarians, departmental governments, academia, social organizations, trade unions, media, and citizens.
- The University of the Republic successfully led a dedicated citizen engagement project, leveraging pre-existing platforms such as regional water committees and watershed commissions.
- Following the broad stakeholder engagement, feedback was integrated into the final version of the NWP. Successfully approved at the highest levels of government, the final plan defined ten programs and 30 projects, and established the basis for the formulation of regional plans and premises at the basin level.

Importantly, Uruguay's approach strengthened public systems—reaffirming the value of greater community engagement in decision-making processes. Moving forward, OGP's IRM national researchers have recommended building on the success of the NWP by introducing a citizen monitoring system, and possibly expanding the engagement model to other sectors, such as housing, health, or education.



OGP peers can benefit as well. The Uruguay model provides several lessons to others looking to increase participation in sectoral planning:

- **Publicly document progress:** NWP progress was regularly captured through news updates online, ensuring full transparency in the development process. This helped develop momentum around the process.
- **Ensure institutional support:** Beyond simply responding to a legal requirement, this process had support from the Office of the President. This high-level prioritization can accelerate progress and help ensure success.
- **Leverage existing institutions:** Rather than create new structures to facilitate participation, the development of the NWP invited input from existing institutions like the Regional Water Committees. This approach can build legitimacy by working with well-connected stakeholders and also accelerate the process by avoiding the time-intensive work of developing new stakeholder platforms.

Photo by Matyas Rehak, Adobe Stock

The frontiers of WASH in OGP

OGP members have enacted a variety of reforms related to the accessibility, management transparency, and public accountability of water and sanitation. With commitments ranging from digital mapping of clean drinking water access points to increased collaboration between tenants and landlords in expanding sanitation systems, these reforms can offer opportunities for vast improvements to basic quality of life for all people.

However, despite these successes, WASH continues to be, relative to other public policy areas, greatly underexplored in OGP action plans:

- Twenty-five OGP members have included water commitments at some point in their action plans since 2012. (Nine are implementing relevant commitments as of 2019.) Contrast this with more than twice that number in education or extractives. Some of these commitments are related to environmental management of water, rather than water for drinking, cleaning and washing.

- The 25 members have made a total of 39 water commitments, of which 30 have been assessed by IRM and nine are actively being implemented in eight members.
- IRM has given a star to only one commitment (which is low relative to other policy areas; less than 3 percent compared to 9 percent among non-WASH commitments). (This is featured above in the box, “Uruguay’s National Water Plan.”)

To address the significant challenges presented by the urgency of improving WASH and gaps in current OGP commitments, this report takes a closer look at available data to identify where OGP countries might move next to address: 1) data on the policy area, 2) data on the policy process (with a closer look at spending for marginalized groups), and 3) participation and accountability in water and sanitation.



Data for WASH decision-making

Despite the small number of overall WASH-related commitments and the somewhat new policy focus they represent, OGP efforts were highly-targeted and effective. Eight commitments addressed transparency on water and sanitation services:

- Providing access to data on wastewater treatment facility performance (Chile);
- Developing a portal to share data on water quality being distributed by water treatment plants (Panama);
- Publishing data on the location and performance of water access points (Kigoma, Tanzania);
- Sharing data on publicly funded sanitation services (Peru); and
- Creating a water quality portal in La Libertad, Peru (see “Lessons from reformers: La Libertad” for a longer description of progress and challenges).

Third-party data shows significant room for growth around WASH data. Relative to other sectors (e.g., health and education), water and sanitation data is the most advanced in OGP. However, as the La Libertad example illustrates below, despite the richness of available data, significant problems with interoperability and sustainability continue to constrain this policy area.

The challenges for water data and sanitation data are nearly identical. Figures 1 and 2 show the availability of water data on the websites of national statistical organizations (NSOs) of OGP countries based on Open Data Watch’s Open Data Inventory (ODIN):³³

- Four in five OGP countries publish data on household access to drinking water (79 percent) and household access to sanitation (81 percent). (Column 1 of Figure 1 and 2 respectively.)
- Nearly two-thirds (68 percent for water and 70 percent for sanitation) have data covering three of the last five years, while only a quarter have data for all of the last five years (29 percent and 27 percent respectively). (Column 2.)

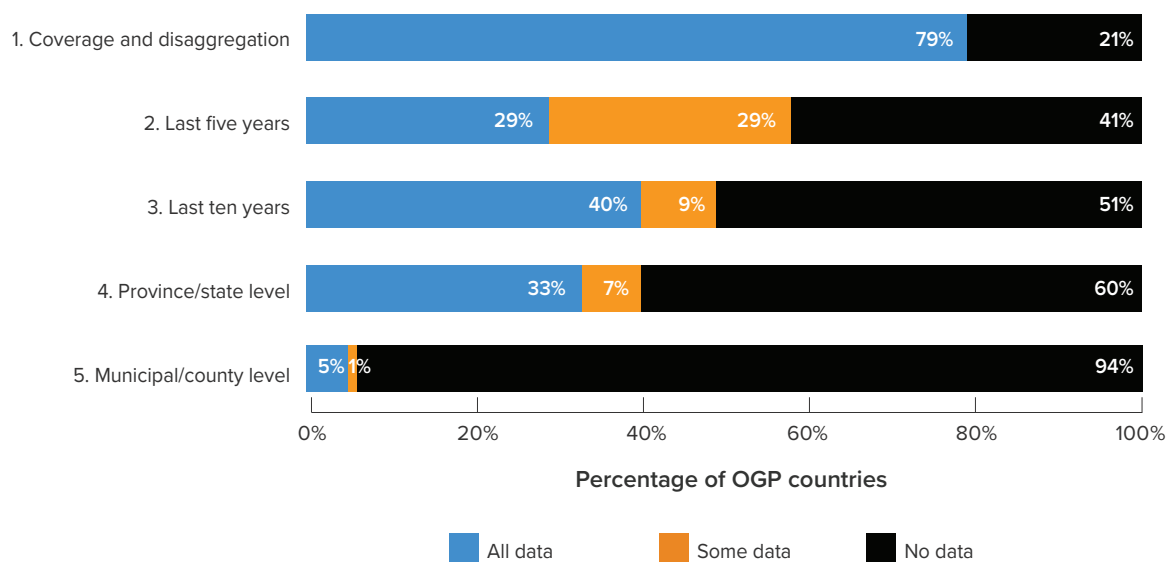
- Over the last ten years, more than a third (40 percent and 37 percent respectively) have at least six of those years. (Row 3.)
- Some data is widely available at the national level, and a third (33 percent and 37 percent) have the data at the provincial, state, or regional level, but few (5 percent and 6 percent) maintain municipal-level data. (Rows 4 and 5.) This may be due in a large part to the fragmented nature of such information or, in some cases, lower levels of data may not exist in a shareable format. This is an area for particular improvement in OGP countries.

Further analysis of the ODIN findings regarding open data is both encouraging yet evident of the need for additional commitment focus.

- The positive: Half (47 percent) of OGP countries publish water data in a machine-readable format, allowing for re-use. Two thirds (67 percent) publish the data in a non-proprietary format.
- The negative: Less than half (41 percent) make the data bulk downloadable across indicators, and only a quarter (26 percent) have licenses that allow for re-use.

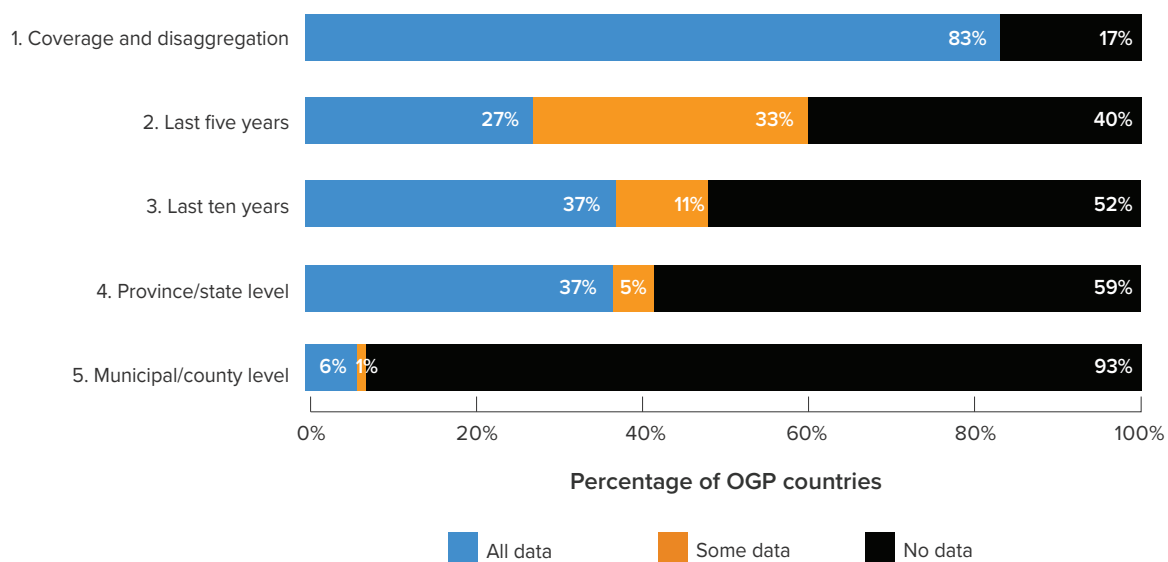
Despite the relatively high coverage of water and sanitation data, the La Libertad example (later in this section) also shows that when national-level data is not reusable or open, this can lead to major delays and problems with rolling out local-level data initiatives.³⁴

FIGURE 1. Most OGP countries have data on drinking water access, but lack time series and localized data



Source: Open Data Watch Open Data Inventory 2017, Access to drinking water data (n=79)

FIGURE 2. Most OGP countries have data on access to improved sanitation, but lack time series and localized data



Source: Open Data Watch Open Data Inventory 2017, Access to improved sanitation (n=79)





LESSONS FROM REFORMERS

La Libertad, Peru: The importance of open data in water planning

In La Libertad, like much of Peru, local service providers often lack the technical and financial resources to ensure access to safe water. As a result, “uncertainty about water quality is constant among users.”³⁵

In response to these challenges, as part of its OGP action plan, the government of La Libertad planned to build a web platform with updated information on the “coverage and quality of water for human consumption,” as well as information on sanitation services. In addition, the site would allow the public the ability to share water and sanitation challenges and register suggestions and emergency requests.

To coordinate between agencies, levels of government, and sectors, the first step was to establish a committee to lead. The committee designed the information needed for the web portal, identified data sources, and supported development of the platform.

Even with its emphasis on coordination between sectors and levels of government, the committee faced challenges in opening this data. The original plan called for data to be provided by the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Sanitation. The committee was unable to share the data, however, due to a restrictive license. The committee ended up using different data from an existing platform developed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Consequently, the platform had to be developed differently and may not be as easily updatable. At the time of the IRM review, the website was nearly complete, although it was not yet launched.

La Libertad demonstrates how, even when data is publicly available, restrictive licensing and formatting issues can be a major technical roadblock to improving services.

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Photo by Monica Tijero, World Bank

Information on the policy process

Twenty-one OGP commitments focus on transparent water and sanitation decision-making. This makes these commitments the most common at nearly two-thirds of all WASH commitments. Specific commitments have included:

- Increasing transparency in the application process for developing new water services (Albania);
- Developing a process for elaborating service-level standards for water access (Tanzania, when it was still a part of OGP);
- Publishing information related to water investment plans (Kenya);
- Implementing standards to share procurement data (Honduras); and
- Training external stakeholders to use open contracting data for monitoring procurement processes (Honduras).

Beyond commitments within OGP, we can look at where the broader strengths of governance are within the water and sanitation sectors, at least at the national level. This can be done using the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) database, the product of a UN-Water initiative implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO). The GLAAS database covers 36 of 79 OGP countries, primarily in the global south, as well as Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

GLAAS data is unique among the datasets used in preparing this report in that it shows, for most indicators, that OGP countries are not outperforming their peers.³⁶ Relative to three decision-making areas of focus, the data found:

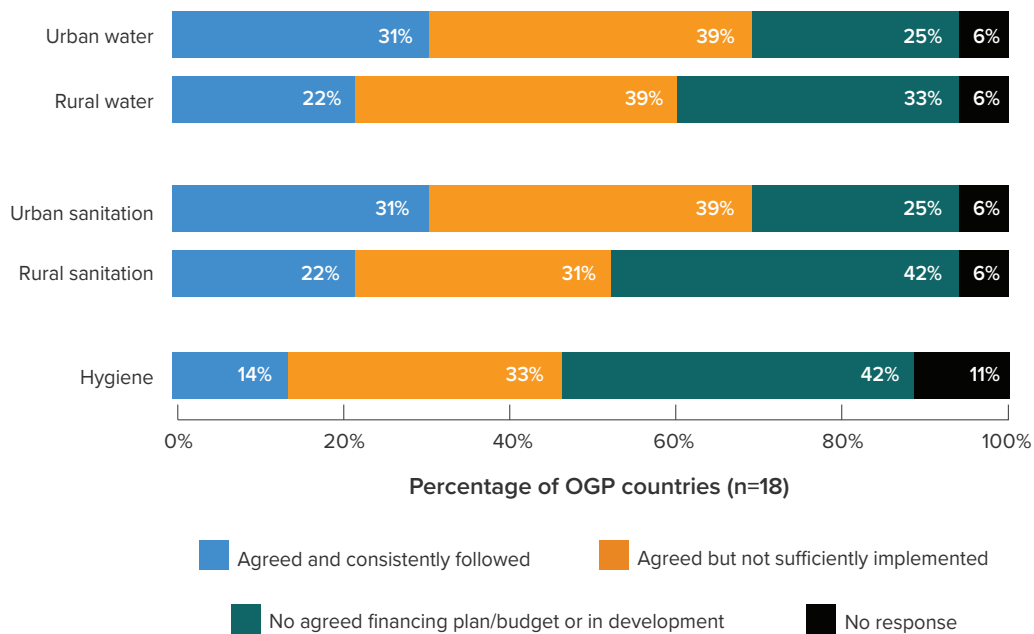
- **Planning:** The majority of OGP countries report having plans in place for sanitation and drinking water in both settings. More of these plans remain unimplemented than implemented. Less than half have hygiene plans in place. (See Figure 3 on the next page for details.)
- **Finance:** The majority of OGP countries publish expenditure data on water and sanitation in rural and urban settings, although a significant majority do not publish domestic expenditures, official development assistance (ODA), and non-ODA expenditures. (See Figure 4 on the next page for details.) There is irregular data on water- and sanitation-system capacity for cost-recovery through tariffs, adequacy of revenue, and absorption of funds.³⁷
- **Monitoring:** Roughly a third of OGP countries have robust monitoring systems in place for planning, resource allocation, and quality of service delivery in the water sector. Sanitation tracking is significantly better with nearly half of OGP countries having monitoring systems in place. Specific measures taken to monitor service delivery to people living in poverty are roughly consistent with other figures. (See Figure 5 on the next page for details.)

In addition to general transparency, the data shows the degree to which planning integrates specific reference to vulnerable populations.

- **Planning for vulnerable populations:** More than two-thirds of plans have measures referencing people living in poverty, remote populations, people with disabilities, and informal settlements. Roughly half reference women, populations with high disease burden, and indigenous populations. (See Figure 6.)
- **Spending on vulnerable populations:** There is, however, a significant disconnect when connecting commitments and planning to actual specific measures and finance dedicated to these same population segments. Among the same group of countries, fewer than half have dedicated expenditures to target vulnerable populations. Less than a quarter followed through on their plans to address vulnerable populations. (See Figure 7.)

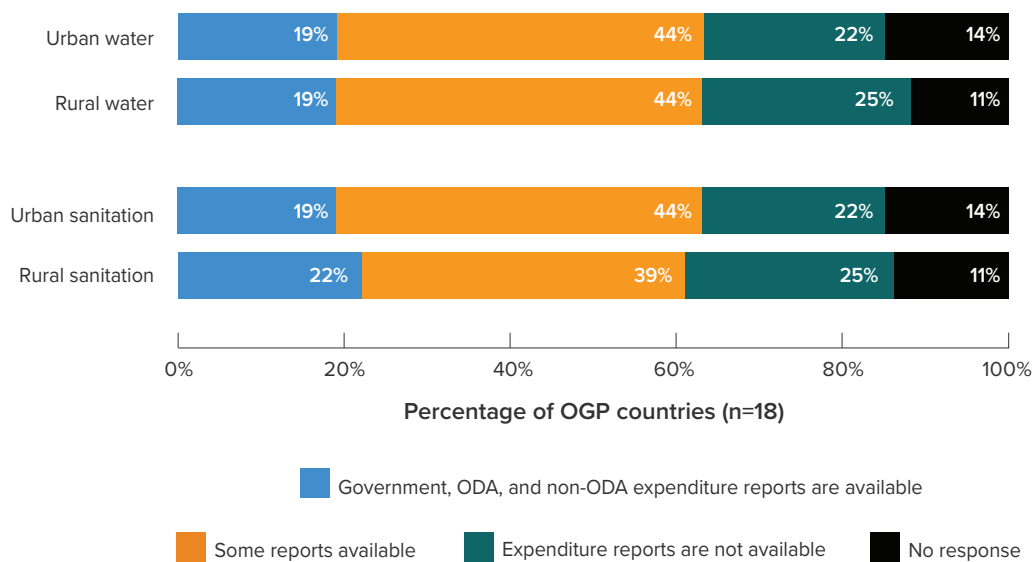


FIGURE 3. A minority of OGP countries surveyed publish and follow national water, sanitation, and hygiene plans



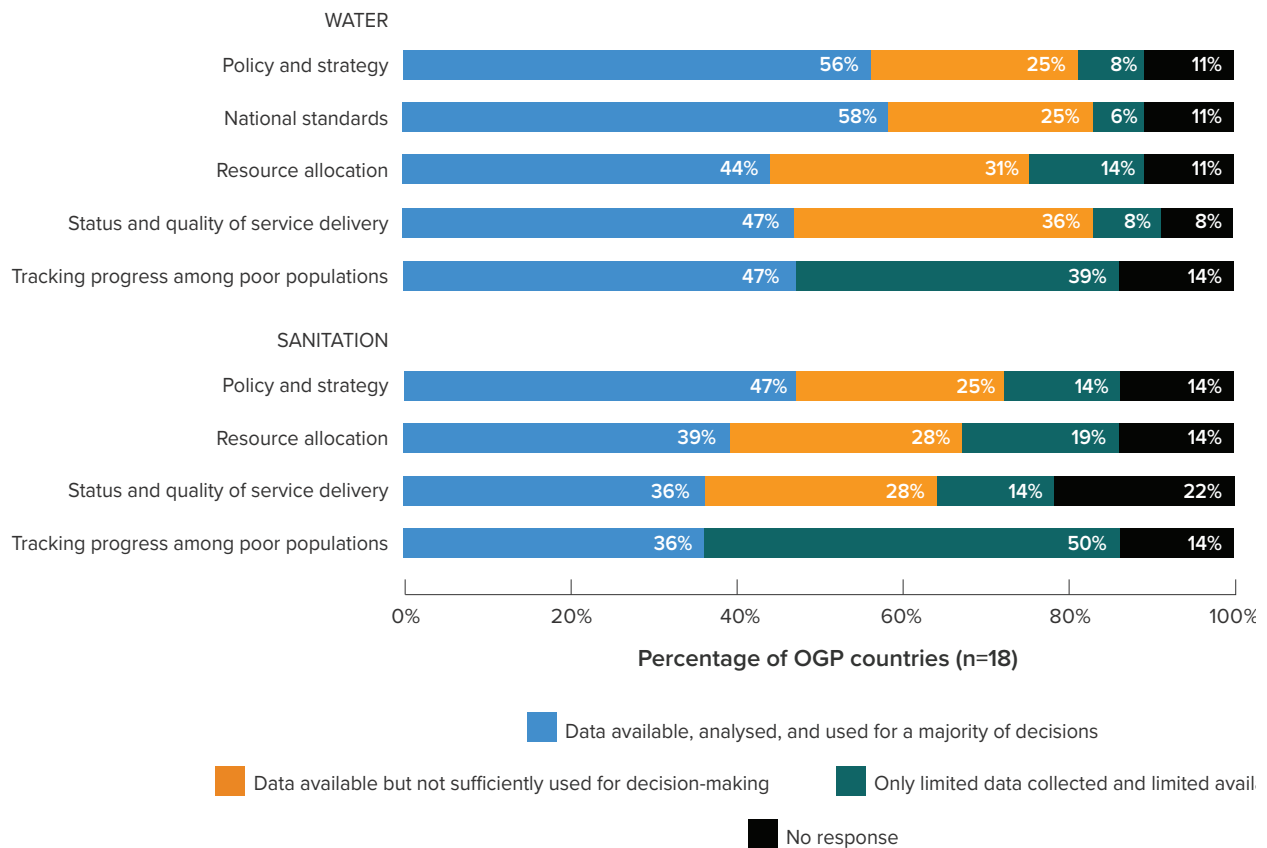
Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): National Plans

FIGURE 4. Over half of OGP countries surveyed publish some expenditures by WASH subsector, but less than a quarter publicize government and ODA reports



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Expenditures

FIGURE 5. Relevant data is published and used for decision-making in roughly half of OGP countries. Use of sanitation data lags behind water



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Sectoral data and decision-making

The financing gap is supported by additional GLAAS findings. The report shows that there is a significant disconnect between expenditures in relatively wealthy, urban areas and poor urban and rural areas. The gap between planning to address vulnerable groups and actually providing services creates several opportunities for OGP countries seeking to reach people living in poverty:

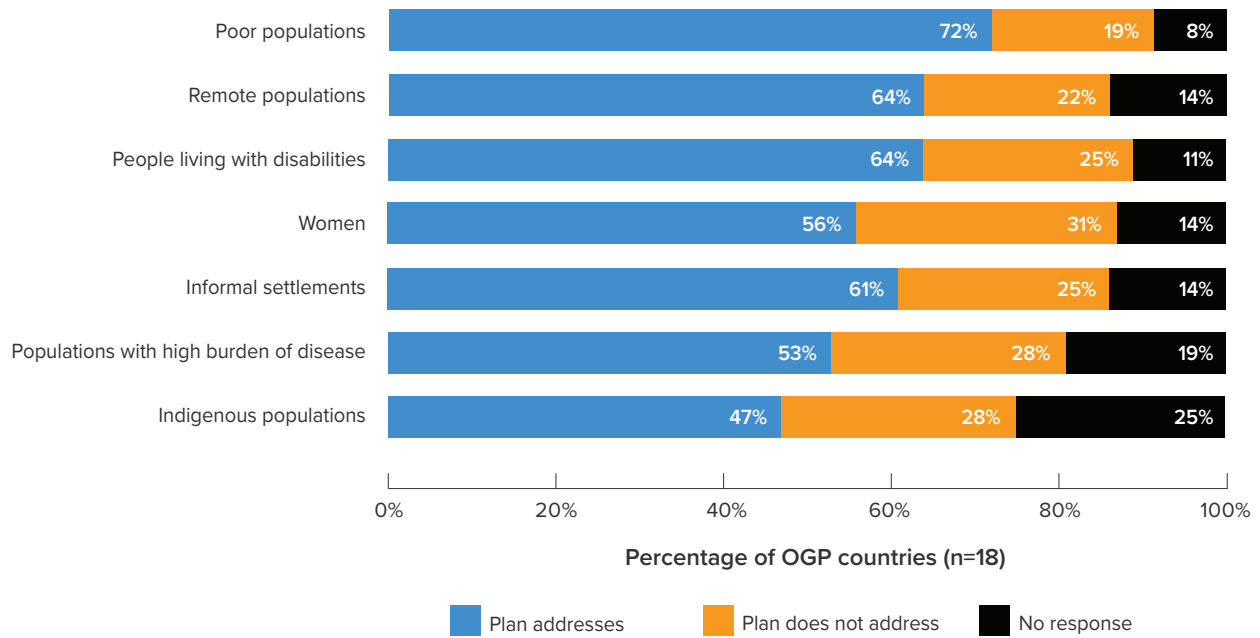
- Improve tracking systems and expenditures on a project-by-project basis. Specifically, improve the interoperability of data to enable greater focus on poorer areas. Improved data includes geo-coding plans and expenditures, creating unique identifiers for interventions, and creating special tags when interventions aim to help vulnerable populations. TrackFin is a globally accepted standard method for gathering this information.³⁸ (See the box later in the section.)

- Conduct accountability and audit measures to verify that revenue allocated for the poor reaches its intended target. The GLAAS survey looks at twelve indicators covering the categories of responsibility, answerability, and enforceability, but does not look at these directly through the lens of marginalized communities. It is an area of future development.³⁹
- Enable the public to carry out informal audits and reporting where plans, budgets, and expenditures do not align.

This latter set of considerations moves beyond concerns around process transparency, to specific interventions which can help improve public involvement in decision-making and accountability for official actions (and inactions).

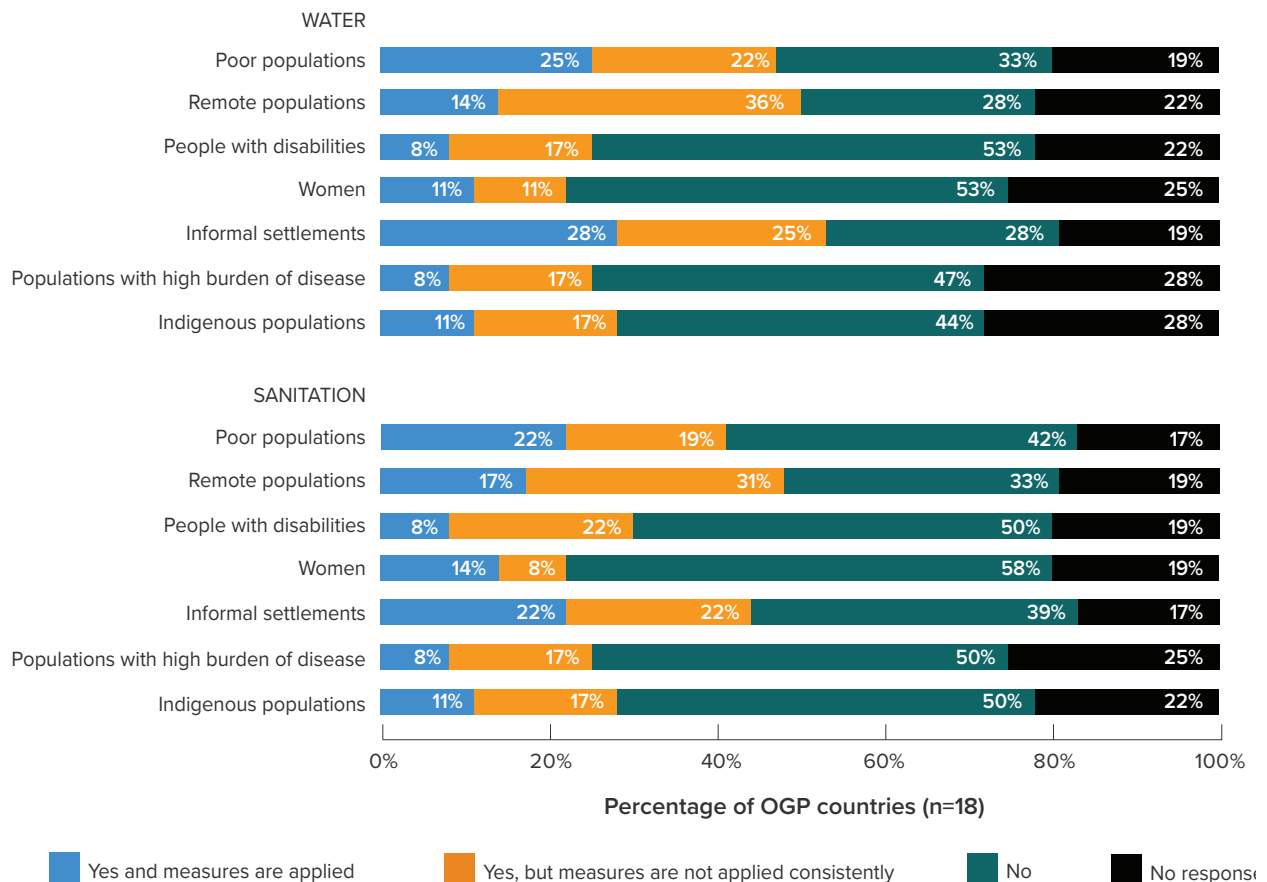


FIGURE 6. Most OGP countries surveyed publish plans to reach vulnerable populations



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Planning for Vulnerable Groups

FIGURE 7. Most finance plans do not have specific means to target vulnerable populations



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Planning for Vulnerable Groups



LESSONS FROM REFORMERS

Municipal budget and spending data for water in the Netherlands

Starting in 2015, Dutch local governments began providing financial data through a web portal at www.openspending.nl. However, this data was initially only available at the aggregate level, making it difficult to access critical detailed and local information. In 2016, as part of its action plan, the Netherlands committed to improving the availability of more detailed data (such as budgets, annual reports, income, expenditure and revenue) in a machine-readable format. While the commitment extended beyond water, water management authorities were noted specifically in the action plan.

The focus of this commitment has been providing necessary support to local municipalities and regional authorities, including water authorities. The commitment called for three milestones:

1. Develop resources, including a handbook, an instruction video, and a promotional video;
2. Implement three pilots with local governments to add context to open data; and
3. Host two national workshops.

The Netherlands achieved substantial progress on these milestones and completed many on time. A comprehensive handbook that provides guidance to data providers on how to share data has been distributed to all stakeholders. Additionally, the videos were completed and the first national workshop was held as part of the Netherlands' "How Open Festival."

This commitment made significant progress increasing transparency of the governance process and publishing information about how water management authorities chose to invest their funds. This provides information that can increase accountability, enable advocacy, and create space for participation. The IRM recommended expanding this data





provision, stating that “the government should consider developing a participatory budgeting interface.”⁴⁰

This experience provided lessons that may be useful for other OGP countries looking to make similar commitments:

- **Prioritize data in response to demand:** The basis for this commitment was specific requests from data users (i.e. citizens, journalists, and others). Governments often have access to massive amounts of information about water and sanitation. By prioritizing data that has been specifically requested, the impact of investments in open data is assured.
- **Start small:** While the original commitment called for participation of 75 decentralized authorities in 2016 and 150 decentralized authorities in 2017, this aggressive approach turned out to be infeasible. In 2017, the relevant milestone was revised to focus on three targets in order “to gain experience on a smaller scale with improving the quality and the scale-up potential.”⁴¹ Sharing financial data, especially data around something as critical as water services, can be politically sensitive. Starting with a small pilot can build a strong case to demonstrate that data-sharing information can be a political opportunity, rather than a risk.
- **Prepare for accelerated progress:** The goal of this commitment was to improve public accountability and participation “because users know how money is spent in their government and they can participate and better use the right to challenge.”⁴² Recognizing that a key role of opening the data is to encourage participation, commitments to increase transparency should anticipate the corresponding increase in participation. Effective commitments at this level can be paired with commitments to increase platforms for participation at the same time.

Photo by Hansenn, Adobe Stock

Public involvement in policy and implementation

To date, there has been limited OGP investment in public participation and accountability in the WASH sector. This is supported by third-party data which shows that participation policies, while nearly universal, are not commonly implemented. As of 2018, 11 OGP commitments aimed to increase participation in water and sanitation services. Specific commitments include:

- Engaging citizens through a mobile application to report water leaks (Dominican Republic)
- Engaging communities in identifying and preparing for risks to water sources (Honduras)
- Collaborating with civil society to improve water efficiency in the Netherlands (see the previous box for an example)
- Creating platforms for landlords and residents to collaborate on improving household sanitation in slums (Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana)
- Developing a national water plan with input from civil society and other stakeholders in Uruguay (see the earlier box on Uruguay for a longer discussion)

These commitments reflect new avenues for participation both in direct service provision as well as in helping shape policy. They do, however, demonstrate room for improvement. In preparing this report, the authors evaluated all of the OGP WASH commitments which allowed feedback from the public. While 11 did allow for the public to give input, none provided feedback from the government to the public about how inputs were used.

As OGP commitments are limited in this area, it is important to outline where room for future improvement may lie. The GLAAS report again has helpful data,⁴³ showing just how many of the 36 OGP countries reporting to UN-Water have public participation procedures in place and how many follow them.

Figure 8 on the next page shows that, of the countries reporting, nearly all have policies, regulations, or laws requiring participation in urban and rural sanitation, urban and rural water, hygiene, and water resources management. No fewer than three-quarters of OGP

countries have such policies in place. (The GLAAS database does not evaluate such procedures for their strength, legal force, or enforcement.)

Actual practice stands in stark contrast to stated policy. With the exception of rural water, less than 1 in 10 countries had high rates of participation in water and sanitation planning. Again, aside from rural water, fewer than half had any participation at all. (A subsector analysis is available in Figure 9 on the next page.) Given that this data is based on government-validated reporting from national stakeholder meetings, the stark contrast should be taken seriously. In addition, the survey does not explore the quality of public participation or whether the public had any influence on policy or discussion. Resources exist which can help to foster an environment for participation in water and sanitation.⁴⁴

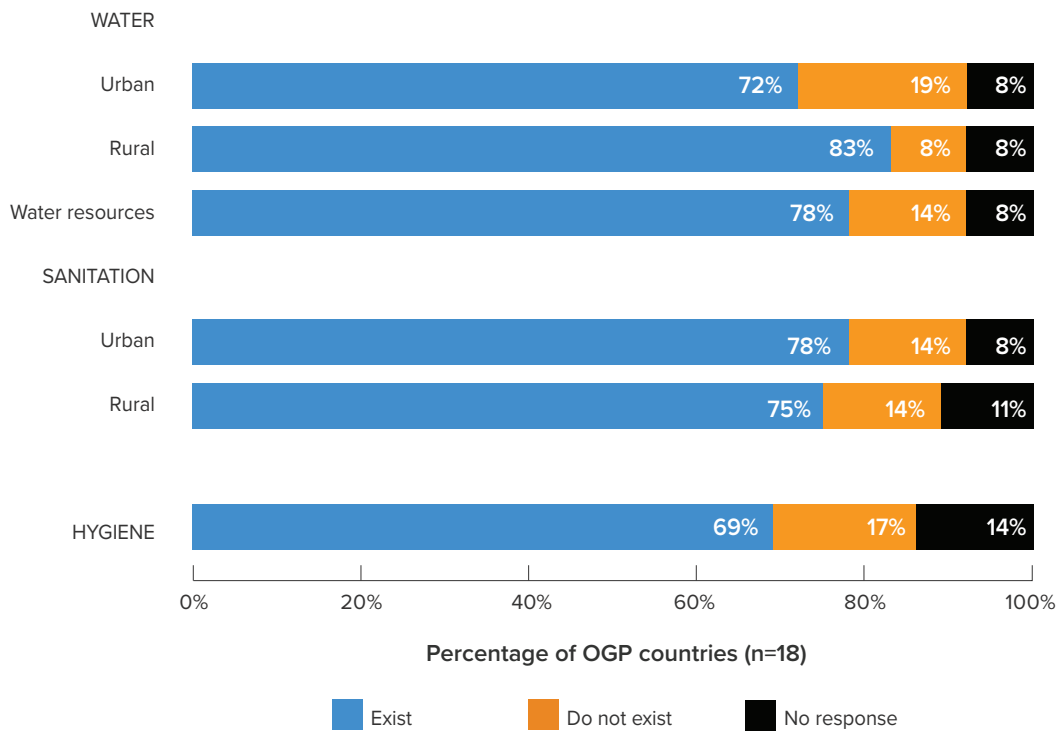
The 2014 GLAAS survey looked at public access to enforcement mechanisms. (The most recent 2016 survey did not feature this question.) While the data is now more than five years old, less than half of the population had access to effective complaint mechanisms in the majority of subsectors and countries surveyed.⁴⁵ The survey did not define exactly what was meant by “effective complaint mechanisms.” How that is defined is almost certainly contextual. What is clear is that much progress can be made on improving access to and feedback from various complaint mechanisms where service providers or regulators do not carry out their services.

As a result, there is significant room for OGP countries to begin working:

- For the minority of countries without policies on public participation in sectors, there is room to improve general policy.
- For others, there is significant room to improve the quality of existing public participation policies, especially where such policies require the establishment of standing committees, open meetings of water commissions, and other regularized and institutionalized participation.

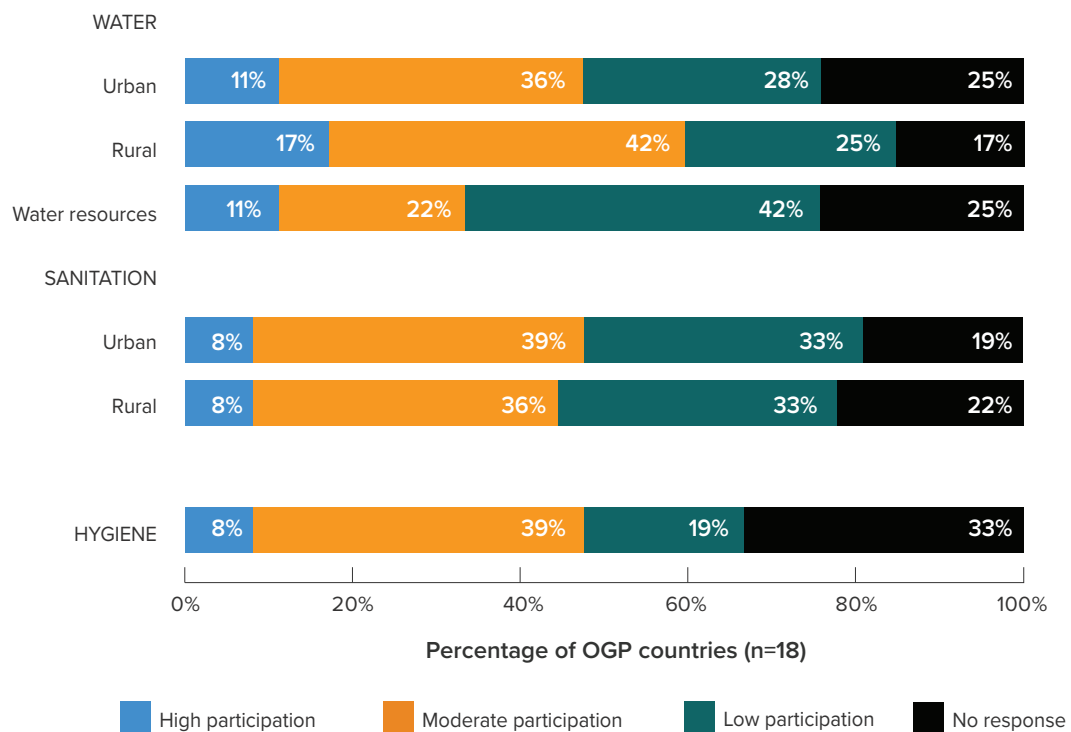


FIGURE 8. Almost all OGP countries surveyed have rules for public participation in planning and monitoring



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Public participation procedures

FIGURE 9. Very few OGP countries had high levels of participation in WASH decision-making processes



Source: WHO GLAAS database (2017): Public participation in practice

Standards for transparency and participation in WASH



“Woman washing clothes next to a latrine at the shore of the Itaya River, Iquitos City, Peru.” Photo by Monica Tijero / World Bank

For OGP countries looking to address WASH through their action plans, standards around water reporting build on the experience of other systems and allow for learning and comparison. Using existing standard reporting processes reduces conceptual work and makes systems compatible and comparable across service providers and countries. Following are some of the existing standards and how they might be applied.

- **Basic level and quality of service data:** These standards provide a clear and globally endorsed data standard, technical guidance, and a global data repository that enables all stakeholders to easily access and analyze data about water services. With relatively low barriers to entry, countries can commit to collecting and sharing data through these frameworks.
 - *Rural water:* The Water Point Data Exchange (WPDx)⁴⁶ sets a standard for mapping and collecting rural water data. (See footnote for a useful case study on the advantages and considerations of water point data.⁴⁷)
 - *Urban utilities:* Performance data can be shared through the International Benchmarking Network for Water and Sanitation Utilities (IBNET).⁴⁸
- *Sanitation tracking methods:* Outside of harmonized monitoring frameworks, countries can commit to piloting newer approaches to monitoring water and sanitation services, such as tracking safe management of fecal waste through the emerging “Excretia Flow Diagram” methodology (typically known by a more colorful acronym, “SFD”), and publishing the results.⁴⁹
- *Regional initiative:* Several regional efforts exist to encourage monitoring and transparency of water and sanitation services. Efforts such as the Africa Water Sector and Sanitation Monitoring and Reporting platform,⁵⁰ supported by the African Minister’s Council on Water, provide regional opportunities to share data transparently on water and sanitation. The Water and Sanitation Information System (“SIASAR” in Spanish) is a similar regional initiative for Central and South America.
- *Household use surveys:* Another approach to standardized data is to look at consumers rather than service providers. One example includes the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys



(MICS),⁵¹ an international household survey developed by UNICEF and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS),⁵² and supported by USAID. These nationally representative surveys provide critical insights on water and sanitation coverage.

- **Improving governance oversight:** Several standard methods can provide clarity on how and why decisions are made.

- *The Open Contracting Data Standard*⁵³ may be utilized with a specific focus on water-related projects or programs that engage citizens in monitoring public contracting to provide timely feedback and fix problems.
- *The Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS)*⁵⁴ initiative, implemented by WHO, provides powerful information about the policy and enabling environment for water and sanitation. (A large portion of this section was based on GLAAS data.)

- **Involving the public in management:** Diverse stakeholders can participate in the WASH sector through a Joint Sector Review (JSR). JSRs are “a periodic assessment of performance within [a specific sector like water and sanitation] by government, development partners, and civil society. The reviews are ideally an integral part of the country’s planning and reporting cycle.”⁵⁵ UN-Water and WHO have standardized tools and monitoring support for the development of the joint sector review. Committing to hold a JSR provides a strong starting point for participation by all stakeholders if properly conducted.⁵⁶

Endnotes

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