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WATER AND OPEN GOVERNMENT

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WITHIN THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

THE CHALLENGE | Global water systems face formidable threats. More than 1 billion people live in water-scarce regions, and as many as 3.5 billion could experience water shortages by 2025. Yet demand for water continues to rise, with OECD projecting a 55 percent increase by 2050.

At the same time, the World Health Organization reports that more than 800 million people currently struggle to find safe, reliable drinking water, and another 2.3 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services like toilets or latrines. Increasing pollution levels are only intensifying these challenges, degrading many of the waterways that sustain poor communities' lives and livelihoods. In developing countries, for instance, 80 percent of toxic, industrial wastewater flows into rivers or oceans untreated, directly impacting the health and safety of both people and the environment.

GOOD WATER GOVERNANCE REQUIRES INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT | Tackling today's water challenges, from expanding service delivery to cleaning up the world's waterways, will require more than improving infrastructure and stepping up investments. Governments and civil society must also address daunting political challenges such as fragmented resource management, corruption and inadequate, unequal access to clean water that communities rely on for their lives and livelihoods. Adopting open government reforms can help governments strengthen institutional capacity, facilitate coordination between stakeholders and resolve communication breakdowns to promote more reliable, efficient water delivery and improve water quality.

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON WATER AND OPEN GOVERNMENT | In 2017, Water Integrity Network (WIN), Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), World Resources Institute (WRI), Fundación Avina and the Open Government Partnership (OGP) formed a Community of Practice on Water and Open Government. Bringing together water and open government experts from around the world, the forum facilitates knowledge sharing and the development of innovative, cross-sector approaches that leverage transparency, inclusive participation and accountable decision-making to improve water management and service delivery.



By working across the OGP, the Community of Practice has a unique opportunity to move the water agenda forward. OGP members can build trust, strengthen political support and influence policy in 75 countries within the Partnership by co-creating national and sub-national commitments focused on improving water governance. Many OGP countries have already outlined innovative ideas focused on transparency and integrity in the water sector. For example, through the OGP:

- The Dominican Republic is improving accountability by creating a mobile app for the public to report breakdowns or failures in water pipes.
- Honduran officials are creating opportunities for the public to participate in water and sanitation by strengthening Supervision and Control Units, made up of local community members, to monitor sanitation and water service delivery providers.
- Uruguay is advancing open data around water usage as well spearheading the inclusive co-creation of a national water plan by including government and civil society stakeholders in the decision-making process.
- Kenya adopted a commitment to develop an open data portal to expand access to information, including water and health information.
- The Dutch government is working to implement a standard protocol to ensure that all provincial authorities, local officials and water management decision-makers release the same financial and spending data, making it easier for the public to track public water expenditures in their local communities.

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN ACTION | The Community of Practice on Water and Open Government creates a space for deliberation, learning and targeted action. Together, members will develop innovative, multi-faceted approaches to overcome the barriers to effective water management and ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable communities are not left behind. Through direct country engagement, new projects and OGP's meetings, the Community of Practice will:

- work with interested government stakeholders to develop and implement country-specific water commitments for OGP National Action Plans;
- facilitate knowledge sharing across organizations, sectors and countries;
- accelerate the creation of dynamic, new crowd-sourced data and information around perception of public water management to drive the impetus for new water management reforms;
- develop a cohesive, compelling voice to advocate for more transparent, inclusive and accountable water governance; and
- engage social movements and local community members in the OGP processes.

JOIN US | This Community of Practice offers an exciting opportunity to create a bridge between governance and water management silos and communities. We encourage civil society, multilateral institutions and government officials to join our Community of Practice as well as share priorities and opportunities to influence and create exciting new reforms.

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