



# THE WATER AND OPEN GOVERNMENT DECLARATION

Clean water is a fundamental human right essential for better health, education and the economic well-being of people. Worldwide, millions of people lack sufficient, safe, accessible and affordable water. Some people only have access to polluted water or must travel far to obtain a safe drinking supply. Others have access to water for only a few hours a day or are forced to pay up to a quarter of their monthly household income for private provision of water.

The Water and Open Government Community of Practice (CoP), supported by Fundación Avina, Stockholm International Water Institute, Water Integrity Network and the World Resources Institute, aims to strengthen water and sanitation (WASH) services for all and ensure the needs of vulnerable, marginalized communities are considered. The CoP will focus on open government

reforms and leverage the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a voluntary international partnership, to increase transparency, participation, accountability and social equity in WASH.

A joint initiative of the CoP, governments, civil society and water advocates is working to create a **Water and Open Government Declaration**, which will support countries in defining commitments for achieving their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on water and sanitation by 2030. The Declaration is an international call for ambitious action in WASH decision-making, offering an opportunity to increase collaboration and define global priorities on tracking improvements in water access and sanitation worldwide.

## OPEN GOVERNMENT IN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

A recent Open Government Partnership Global Report, *Democracy Beyond the Ballot Box*, identified the following opportunities for open government commitments:

- Data on policy implementation, including tracking data over time, localized data monitoring service delivery and addressing licensing;
- Data on the policy process, which includes a closer look at tracking cost recovery, spending and finance, including for marginalized groups;
- Adopting policies on participation in water and sanitation and more effective accountability systems.



The Water and Open Government Declaration will address key targets from SDG 6 on Water and Sanitation, including:

- Equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water;
- Adequate and equitable sanitation;
- Improved water quality by reducing pollution;
- Dramatically reducing the number of people who suffer from water scarcity; and
- Strengthening the ability of local communities to improve water and sanitation management.

These targets cannot be achieved and the challenges facing the WASH sector cannot be solved without focusing on transparency, public engagement in the decision-making process, mainstreaming considerations of gender and inequality and ensuring there are redress or accountability mechanisms for failures to deliver safe, accessible and affordable water service.

## THE DECLARATION'S FOCUS

The Water and Open Government Declaration will be designed in a consultative manner to ensure it addresses the priorities of stakeholders who work on water service delivery.

The CoP will conduct public and online consultations with relevant stakeholders at regional and international meetings to develop the vision and goals of the Water and Open Government Declaration. These consultations will identify priority areas under open government categories that should be included in the Declaration. The CoP will take this input and produce a draft of the Declaration

with an Advisory Group, which will be shared online for feedback on the Open Government Partnership website. The CoP will then seek endorsement from Open Government Partnership member governments, international institutions, UN bodies, civil society and other movements.

The Declaration will identify priority open government commitments in the sector, building on the work of international organizations focused on water governance improvement and the recognition of the human right to water and sanitation. The CoP recommends the Declaration focus on four commitment categories:

- **TRANSPARENCY:** Commitments to share data on water access and quality, setting tariffs, level of service, distribution and recovering cost or investment plans;
- **PARTICIPATION:** Commitments to integrate participatory and equitable approaches to decision-making, budgeting and contracts and citizen monitoring using technology to accelerate response;
- **GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION:** Commitments to create access to clean, affordable water for all; addressing reasons for inequitable water quality and sanitation; focusing on water stressed and marginalized communities, with a focus on empowering people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, women, the poor and other vulnerable groups; and
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Commitments to improve compliance mechanisms.

The CoP welcomes feedback on priorities that are needed to improve water and sanitation for all.

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