



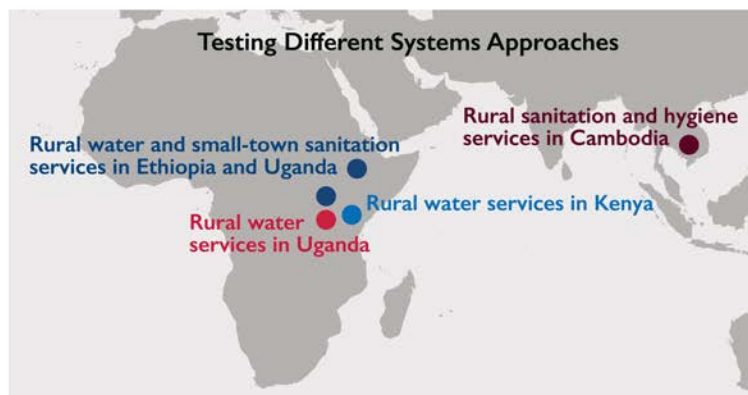
# SUSTAINABLE WASH SYSTEMS LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable services remain a daunting challenge in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector. Traditionally, national and local governments, WASH service providers, and development partners have focused on the construction of WASH facilities and the expansion of service coverage. Less emphasis has been placed on sustaining and maintaining existing WASH services. As a result, failure rates of water supply and sanitation systems continue to be high.

Universal access cannot be achieved without addressing the sustainability of WASH services. This requires taking a comprehensive, long-term view of service delivery and changing local systems. While the sector recognizes this shift in programming is necessary, there has been limited exploration of what approaches work, what benefit they bring to sustainability, and how they can be applied effectively.

## SYSTEMS APPROACH

USAID has recognized that in order for sustainability to be achieved, local systems need to be engaged and strengthened.



USAID's Water and Development Plan in support of the 2017 U.S. Global Water Strategy, has the goal of "increasing the availability and sustainable management of safe water and sanitation for the unserved and most vulnerable". Through the innovative Sustainable WASH Systems (SWS) Learning Partnership, USAID seeks to learn how systems approaches can be used to improve the sustainability of WASH services.

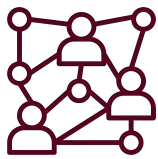
SWS defines a systems approach as one that:

- 1) Seeks to understand the complexity, interactions, and interdependencies between actors and factors through a deliberate, rigorous manner;
- 2) Acts based on this understanding; and
- 3) Regularly adapts to feedback and changing conditions.

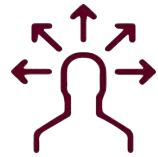
## SWS THEORY OF CHANGE

The SWS theory of change posits that if a WASH system is understood by the actors in that system, those actors will then use that understanding to work together to identify needs and priorities and implement activities to strengthen the system. A strengthened system for the delivery of WASH services will lead to an increased likelihood that these services will be sustained.

In applying this theory of change, we seek to:



**UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM** using a deliberate, rigorous approach that includes engagements with key actors, systems mapping, and analysis tools. SWS teams apply tools such as social network analysis, which examines relationships between actors in a bounded system, and iterative factor mapping and learning, which reveals the factors that influence sustainable WASH services and how those factors influence each other.



**SET PRIORITIES** based on system understanding. SWS helps identify needs and opportunities within the network of actors, designs actions to address key factors and leverage points in the system, and foster local government ownership over their implementation. SWS teams are providing backbone support to coalitions of WASH actors to facilitate the development of a common vision, set shared priorities, and align resources in order to improve the quality and sustainability of WASH services.



**STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM** to improve network function and address factors and challenges. SWS seeks to foster local government leadership and ownership over actions taken to fill gaps within the network of actors and address targeted factors. Specific areas of intervention include establishing common monitoring platforms to share information on services, models for preventative maintenance of water points and systems, and evaluations and analysis of physical and financial assets to inform improved management and regulation, financing, and institutional arrangements that support service provision.



**MONITOR, LEARN, ADAPT, AND SHARE** findings related to systems approaches. SWS's monitoring, evaluation, and learning process allows partners to generate evidence on the effectiveness and potential future applications of their approaches. By generating knowledge products and engaging with key actors, learning under SWS has a dual purpose, (1) to foster learning among local governments and actors to improve services, and (2) to inform USAID, donors, and development partners of the effectiveness of systems approaches, in order to improve the design of future WASH programs.

## LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

University of Colorado Boulder leads a consortium that includes Environmental Incentives, IRC, LINC, Oxford University, Tetra Tech, WaterSHED, and Whave. SWS partners are generating evidence in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Cambodia and sharing what they have learned about strengthening how actors in a system behave, interact, and influence each other, as well as how factors either constrain or enable the sustained provision of services.

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