

Concept note:

## Strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene systems – *towards a core set of indicators and common framework*

### 1. Introduction

**Accelerating progress.** Halfway through the *United Nations Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), the world’s progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) to ‘ensure availability and sustainably managed water and sanitation for all’ is alarmingly off-track.<sup>1</sup> Billions of people still lack access to safely managed drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Despite improvements in the provision of those basic services, gains in coverage are not always equitably benefiting vulnerable populations.<sup>2</sup> Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require a six-fold increase in current global rates of progress on drinking-water, a five-fold increase for sanitation, and a three-fold increase for hygiene.<sup>3</sup>

Accelerating progress on the coverage of safely managed WASH services is underpinned by the strength of the systems that deliver and sustain them. According to the results of the 2021/2022 UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) survey, better performing countries are more likely to have: (1) higher utilization of domestic capital commitments and recovery of operations and maintenance (O&M) costs from tariffs; (2) regulatory authorities that carry out key regulatory functions; and (3) human and financial resources in place to implement their WASH plans.<sup>4</sup> Understanding the vital factors in WASH systems that accelerate country progress and aligning across government and partners to take action to address them, can lead to the transformational changes required to put the sector on course.

**A systemic change in approach is needed for WASH.** The move away from “project-based” approaches and service delivery towards country-led strengthening of national and local WASH systems has been identified as a necessary change for several years in the sector. Findings and recommendations from WASH sector evaluations, studies, and national sector reviews and performance reports, stemming back even further to the *International Decade on Water and Sanitation* (1981–90), highlight significant challenges across countries to sustain functionality of WASH services over time.<sup>5</sup>

Systems strengthening approaches have gained widespread international recognition and increased momentum in recent years. Global and regional multi-stakeholder frameworks such as the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Building Blocks and Collaborative Behaviours (2016), the UN-Water SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework (2020), the World Bank Policies, Institutions and Regulations (PIR) framework (2002), OECD Water Governance indicator framework (2018), AMCOW’s Africa Sanitation Policy Guidelines (2021), and approaches like ‘City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation’ (CWIS, 2016), the creation of the WASH Agenda for Change (2015), establishment of the GLAAS global monitoring programme (2008), development of the WASH-Bottleneck Analysis Tool (WASH-BAT, 2011), inter alia, promote systems strengthening approaches to accelerate progress and sustain WASH services. The UN 2023 Water Conference attended by over 145

<sup>1</sup> UN-Water (2023). *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*. Available at: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023>

<sup>2</sup> *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender*. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2023.

<sup>3</sup> *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender*. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Strong systems and sound investments: evidence on and key insights into accelerating progress on sanitation, drinking-water and hygiene*. UN-Water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking-water (GLAAS) 2022 report. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>5</sup> Several examples include the following: *Assessment of Sustainability and Targeting of DFID’s Water and Sanitation Portfolio, 2011-2015*, *Global Evaluation of UNICEF’s Drinking Water Supply Programming in Rural Areas and Small Towns 2006-2016*, the World Bank ‘Sustainability Assessment of Rural Water Service Delivery Models’ (2017).

Member States and over 10,000 participants included WASH systems strengthening measures among the key recommendations from *Interactive Dialogue 1: Water for Health: Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation*.<sup>6</sup> Outcomes from the IRC All Systems Connect Symposium (2023) emphasized that the biggest issues cannot be solved by the fragmented and siloed thinking of the past. The *WASH Leadership Summit: Eastern and Southern Africa* (2023) put out a statement by Ministers of Finance, WASH, and delegates from 21 countries that recommended five systems-change principles to be adapted to their country context and operationalized, including the establishment of government-led multi-stakeholder platforms for joint planning, coordination and monitoring of WASH.<sup>7</sup>

This evolution of the WASH sector, from an emphasis on construction of infrastructure and ad hoc behaviour change engagement alone towards a recognition that the ultimate goal is delivery of safely managed WASH services that are sustained over time, is resulting in convergence in the sector towards a WASH systems strengthening approach.<sup>8</sup> Current and future global challenges – from climate change, fragility and conflict, to competition for scarce resources – require different thinking. There is a need to collaborate and coordinate differently, and to connect across sectors and disciplines, and public, private and civil society, which can only be done through systems leadership and collective action, with governments at the centre. To galvanize the implementation of systems strengthening at the country level, strengthening the monitoring and review component of the country development planning cycle with a whole systems lens is vital.

However, at present, the various efforts to describe the components of WASH systems have not yet converged on a common understanding or approach. There is currently a co-existence of various similar, but different, conceptual frameworks and definitions, sometimes being implemented in parallel in the same countries by partners. Main challenges emerging are linked to i) the static nature of these frameworks, ii) the overwhelming number of key elements, iii) the partial consideration of the results chain inputs-processes/activities-outputs-outcomes-impacts and iv) the difficulty of identifying “vital signs” to act upon. Additionally, for global and regional monitoring there is continued reliance on primary data collection through country surveys and tools as data on WASH systems are not readily available for many countries through robust national routine monitoring systems. As a result, for national governments to track progress on WASH systems involves a high burden of reporting to national institutions, development partners, and to regional and global monitoring mechanisms.

Learning from these current efforts by major WASH sector actors and countries and building on decades of experience of UNICEF and WHO with JMP and GLAAS monitoring, provides solid ground for the consolidation of efforts.

**Moving toward a common approach.** A strong common monitoring and review framework can support a broader sector-wide shift towards a WASH systems strengthening approach. A government-led sector-wide approach to monitoring the strength of WASH systems using national monitoring systems is needed to enable decision-makers to accurately monitor progress and track system performance, assess current strengths and weaknesses, identify investment requirements, plan remedial courses of action, and ensure transparency and accountability. When coupled with government-led WASH policies and plans that include objectives and actions on WASH systems strengthening, sector coordination, and a joint performance review process,<sup>9</sup> this forms a comprehensive and coherent ‘WASH systems strengthening’ approach.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://undocs.org/A/CONF.240/2023/4>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2023/11/17/wash-leadership-summit-afe-1123-mobilizing-finance-and-promo-ng-systems-change>

<sup>8</sup> It is proposed to use the terminology in the UNICEF WASH Systems strengthening concept note (January 2024) as a working definition for the WASH systems approach, “A systems approach to WASH is a perspective that looks at the whole system to tackle service delivery challenges. It addresses both the direct and underlying WASH system actors, drivers, and dynamics that affect services, communities, and water ecosystems. WASH systems are made up of and connected by people, infrastructures, water ecosystems, and their governance mechanisms. Sustainable and resilient services depend on the capacity of these system components to play their role adequately, in coordination, for all, and for the long term.” These working definitions can be adapted as needed over the course of pilots if needed.

<sup>9</sup> One such example is the Joint Sector Review (JSR) process that the WASH sector in many countries follows.

Two interrelated elements can facilitate a sector-wide shift towards national monitoring of the strength of WASH systems at country level:

- A **globally agreed set of core indicators** to monitor the strength of WASH systems, covering inputs/processes/outputs in addition to outcomes and impact, that can be integrated into national monitoring systems. Standardized indicators that incorporate important cross-cutting issues like climate- and disaster resilience will also be included. In addition to bolstering national monitoring systems, a core set of WASH systems indicators agreed with regional and global partners can help streamline and standardise country reporting.
- A **common monitoring and review framework** to guide countries to define a relevant set of national indicators to monitor the strength of WASH systems, which includes the core indicators. It will guide countries to undertake an analytical review to assess the strength of WASH systems based on the national indicators, identifying bottlenecks and areas in need of strengthening. It will assist countries to put in place national monitoring systems that can provide data and information on the strength of WASH systems for government-led review mechanisms such as a joint sector review, sector performance reports, government and stakeholder decision-making processes including development of WASH sector policies, strategies and plans, as well as monitoring national commitments, such as those in the Heads of States Initiative.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past 20 years the health sector has developed and operationalized a similar approach which consists of a framework of action,<sup>11</sup> core indicators,<sup>12</sup> and a common monitoring and evaluation logical framework.<sup>13</sup> The UN-Water GLAAS session organized at Stockholm World Water Week in August 2023 ‘*Monitoring WASH systems: What can we learn from monitoring health systems?*’<sup>14</sup> and the meeting organized by Aguaconsult and the Osprey Foundation ‘*Accelerating WASH Systems Strengthening*’ in London, United Kingdom in October 2023<sup>15</sup> reaffirmed a strong consensus within the sector on the need to define a core set of WASH systems indicators as a critical next step in supporting a common approach to monitoring the strength of WASH systems.

As the core indicators are progressively adopted by countries into national monitoring systems, the ultimate vision for regional and global monitoring, including GLAAS, will be to transition away from primary data collection, and instead use data harvested from national monitoring and review processes to inform and streamline global reporting, thus reducing some of the reporting burden on countries. Additionally, adopting international standardized core indicators allows countries to benchmark their performance against similar countries in their region or income category.

Looking forward, harmonization and standardization of core indicators and an agreed common monitoring and review framework will further contribute to the evidence base of methodologies for monitoring the strength of WASH systems, including climate resilience.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Heads of States Initiative, <https://www.sanitationandwaterforall.org/heads-state-initiatives>

<sup>11</sup> Everybody business: strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes: WHO’s framework for action. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2007. ISBN 978 92 4 159607 7

<sup>12</sup> 2018 Global Reference List of 100 Core Health Indicators (plus health-related SDGs). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>13</sup> Monitoring, evaluation and review of national health strategies: a country-led platform for information and accountability. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2011; and, Primary health care measurement framework and indicators: monitoring health systems through a primary health care lens. Geneva: World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Link to session at Stockholm World Water Week: <https://vimeo.com/854941581/51bdce1ab4>

<sup>15</sup> Link to meeting report: <https://aguaconsult.co.uk/news/wash-systems-strengthening-meeting-2023/>

<sup>16</sup> This work could also possibly generate “proof of concept” for potential candidate indicators for ‘means of implementation’ type indicators that could be provided as a technical input to negotiations of the next global sustainable development agenda post-2030.

## 2. Proposed approach

To support the development of a common approach to monitor the strength of WASH systems, WHO and UNICEF propose a joint initiative for defining and agreeing to a sector approach on a standard set of core WASH systems strengthening indicators. Developing and implementing this strategic shift will require strong collaboration between governments, multi-lateral agencies, donors, NGOs, academic and other development partners. In the context of limited funding, there is a need for more coherent support to countries and a more efficient use of resources. Such an approach will also rely on development partners modelling the SWA collaborative behaviours.<sup>17</sup> This will require a shift in incentives toward a culture of shared results over the prioritisation of organizational brand, including for WASH sector donors to move towards accepting contribution over attribution results reporting. If done well, this can signal an important intent to national government partners on the value of collective action and an international commitment to prioritising national government needs.

### ***What will the initiative do?***

The objectives of this joint initiative are:

- To steer a process for the development of a set of agreed core indicators and a common monitoring and review framework to monitor the strength of WASH systems.
- To pilot in a few selected, but diverse country settings: data collection, data visualization and data use by national and regional/global actors in several countries, based upon a localized approach using the set of core indicators and the common monitoring and review framework.
- To support governments and partners in the establishment of a process for regular national monitoring and review of the strength of WASH systems through an evidence-based joint sector review-type process, based on a set of national indicators that will include the core indicators.

The joint initiative will produce the following outputs:

- An agreed set of core indicators that can be integrated into the national monitoring system by governments to measure the strength of WASH systems.
- A common monitoring and review framework to be used by national governments to analyse progress on the strength of WASH systems using the core indicators and undertake periodic sector reviews to identify progress and any shifts in priority actions.
- Guidance to countries on how to conduct an analytical review using the core indicators, including visual representations that reflect the core indicators in a way that is easy to understand and allows comparisons over time and between countries and can be used by national governments in review mechanisms and decision-making processes.
- A process for monitoring relevant core indicators through the GLAAS country survey and establishing a roadmap for eventual transition to government monitoring.

### ***Who is involved?***

In order for the core indicators and common monitoring and review framework to be of most value to the sector, they must be developed in a collaborative, participatory and inclusive way with countries at the centre. WHO and UNICEF propose to convene and coordinate the process, in close collaboration with key WASH sector partners including the World Bank, as well as AFD, Aguaconsult, Care, Conrad N. Hilton, Foundation, DGIS, FCDO, GIZ, IRC, Osprey Foundation, SHF, SIWI, SNV, USAID, Water for People, WaterAid and other interested partners; in coordination with key sector platforms and partnerships such as SWA, Agenda for Change, and UN-Water; and in close consultation with national governments and diverse global, regional and local

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<sup>17</sup> SWA Collaborative Behaviours, <https://www.sanitationandwaterforall.org/about/our-work/priority-areas/collaborative-behaviours>

stakeholders, including those from other related sectors. The initiative will require key actors to collaborate using a “whole of organization” approach to ensure engagement and leverage capacities across all levels – global, regional, national, and sub-national.

With the GLAAS programme now entering its seventh cycle of data collection on WASH systems, the extensive experience monitoring outcomes and health impact through the WHO/UNICEF JMP and WASH burden of disease monitoring, and UNICEF’s vast network of dedicated WASH professionals on the ground in over 100 countries, WHO and UNICEF are well-placed to co-convene and coordinate the joint initiative.

### **How will it work?**

A four-phase approach is proposed:

- Phase 1: Background discussion paper and preparatory work: May to September 2024.
- Phase 2: Consultations and development of core indicators and common monitoring and review framework: September 2024 to March 2025.
- Phase 3: Pilot testing and finalization of core indicators and common monitoring and review framework: January 2025 to September 2025
- Phase 4: Upscaling led by countries with aligned support from development partners. September 2025 onwards up to 2030

For Phases 1 and 2, WHO and UNICEF propose to co-lead the evidence-based multi-stakeholder consultative process to identify a set of core indicators for WASH systems and to develop guidance on a monitoring and review framework. Additionally, through GLAAS and JMP, WHO and UNICEF are currently in the process of leading an initiative to identify indicators for monitoring climate resilient WASH. As a custodian agency for global monitoring and reporting of SDG targets 6.a. and 6.b., the WHO GLAAS team is also undertaking an assessment to improve monitoring of the means of implementation (MoI) for SDG 6 to inform the negotiations of the global development agenda “post-2030” and, therefore, will be able to ensure synergy and coherence between the various indicators and initiatives.

Additionally, for Phase 2, it is proposed to establish a “technical working group” convened and coordinated by WHO and UNICEF that will actively collaborate on the development and review of the core indicators and common monitoring and review framework building on the collective expertise, experience and complementarity of the members. Members of the technical working group will represent national governments from different regions and country typologies,<sup>18</sup> development partners (major players including donors and NGOs in the WASH sector), and academia, and will engage key stakeholders throughout the process. The process will produce the draft core indicators and common monitoring and review framework.

Phase 3 involves the pilot testing of the draft core indicators and common monitoring and review framework with a few countries and partners. The phase will be implemented together with members of the “technical working group” from Phase 2, but in more of a “task team” arrangement co-coordinated by WHO and UNICEF, and with a shared workplan that will rely upon close collaboration with country offices of respective partners taking a lead role for piloting in specific countries. The two products will be used, improved and validated by the task team members through their country programming, for example through World Bank lending operations and leveraging UNICEF’s WASH sector coordination role in over 80 countries. At the end of the process, the core indicators and common monitoring and review framework will be finalized and published.

Finally, Phase 4 involves a broader consultation with countries to prepare for upscaling of the agreed core indicators and common monitoring and review framework through localization in national monitoring systems, joint sector review processes, performance reports, as well as links with national sector policies and plans. In addition to country-level work, this phase also includes alignment of regional/global monitoring and reporting

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<sup>18</sup> Annex 1 includes possible criteria for country selection.

processes and will include updating the GLAAS country survey based on the adopted core indicators for the 2027/28 GLAAS cycle.

**What will the initiative aim to accomplish?**

At the end of the initiative, the following outcomes are expected:

- National governments have a clear and shared understanding of the key components to track the strengths and weaknesses of their WASH systems and how to incorporate them in national monitoring and review systems, leading to more informed decision-making and better targeting of resources in the WASH sector.
- Development partners' understanding and work to monitor the strength of WASH systems is more harmonized and better aligned with countries' needs.
- GLAAS monitoring process will increasingly rely on country-reported data collected through national monitoring systems.
- National, regional and global monitoring of WASH systems is improved, and the burden of reporting is reduced, based on the core indicators that have been agreed upon by the sector.

### 3. Proposed process

The remainder of this draft concept note proposes a more in-depth outline of a possible process and timeline.

#### Phase 1: Background discussion paper and preparatory work

The purpose of this phase is to develop a background discussion paper that consolidates existing information and evidence on the monitoring of WASH systems as a starting point for further discussion with stakeholders. The discussion paper will draw on the significant experience and documentation from a number of countries and stakeholders who have worked on defining and monitoring WASH systems. WHO and UNICEF will develop the discussion paper based on desk review and strategic consultation with key stakeholders, including national governments.

The background discussion paper will include:

- An overview of existing WASH systems strengthening frameworks, focusing on a set of countries with national frameworks with national WASH plans and/or systems strengthening programmes (i.e. WASH-BATs, JSRs), and including those used by UNICEF, the World Bank, SWA, IRC, Agenda for Change, Water for People, WaterAid, SIWI, the UN-Water SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, OECD, USAID's Sustainable WASH Systems program, and other frameworks identified by key partners.
- Consolidation of existing indicators used by countries and partners for monitoring of WASH systems elements, including those currently monitored through GLAAS.
- Cross-referencing the WASH sector frameworks and indicators with established health and other sector systems monitoring frameworks (e.g., education, energy, water resources management) and cross-cutting issues (e.g., climate, human rights, gender) as well as general systems change frameworks/theories to identify any major gaps and good practices. It will include lessons learned from the evolution and experience of health system strengthening that are relevant for the WASH sector.
- Review of evidence linking WASH systems elements to outcomes and impact.
- A proposed framework for the core set of indicators to monitor the strength of WASH systems, definitions and parameters or principles based on which the core indicators will be selected, and mapping of existing WASH systems indicators to this framework.

In parallel, WHO and UNICEF will lay the groundwork for the initiative by reaching out to key stakeholders in the sector to initiate discussions on their engagement and possible roles within the joint initiative including country implementation, based on stakeholders' various mandates and presence at country and regional levels. This group of stakeholders will include national governments that are willing to play a lead role in the development of this initiative by piloting the core indicators and eventually integrating the indicators and monitoring and review framework into their national monitoring and review systems. The participation of national governments representing different typologies of countries is important from the onset. A set of possible selection criteria for countries is included in Annex 1.

*Planned timeframe for Phase 1: June to December 2024.*

## Phase 2: Consultations and development of draft core indicators and common monitoring and review framework

The purpose of this phase is to develop the core indicators and the monitoring and review framework. This will be achieved through expert consultations, with the stakeholders identified in Phase 1.

A "technical working group" will be convened and co-led by WHO and UNICEF using the background document as a basis for discussion, to discuss and provide inputs on the following elements (in approximately the listed order):

1. Broad agreement on the indicator areas (e.g., regulation, finance, capacity, equity, sustainability, etc.) from which core indicators will be drawn.
2. Review and analysis of respective core indicator areas. Sub-groups will be formed for each indicator area to review the proposed list of consolidated WASH systems indicators, select those with potential to be candidates for "core indicators," and identify any indicators that are missing from the consolidated list. This may include indicator areas that are currently not monitored by any actors in the WASH sector. Additionally, as elements of the WASH system interact and influence each other "dynamically," it will be important to understand and address the interconnectedness and interactions in the monitoring and analytical methods.
3. Development of the draft common monitoring and review framework based on the selected core indicators.

The consultations will entail a combination of consultations with individual stakeholders and consultation meetings with the "technical working group". This phase may include commissioning further analysis to identify WASH systems elements and indicators that are linked to progress towards improved and equitable access to WASH services. WHO and UNICEF will also ensure alignment and facilitate exchanges with ongoing initiatives on monitoring climate resilient WASH and the means of implementation for SDG 6.

This interactive consultation will also help to build engagement and ownership of national governments and development partners to use the core indicators for their respective programme monitoring and review processes.

*Planned timeframe for Phase 2: January 2025 to October 2025. Note that preparatory work for Phase 2 will start in Q3 2024.*

## Phase 3: Pilot testing and finalization of core indicators and common monitoring and review framework

The purpose of this phase is to test the localization of core indicators in national monitoring systems to see if the analytical review based on the core indicator data can be generated and how it can be used in joint sector reviews and national decision-making processes. WHO and UNICEF, and other interested partners, including the World Bank with in-country presence will pilot test the core indicators to determine "meaningfulness" of



the core indicator data in providing an indication of the strength of the system that is useful at national level as well as globally. Likewise, GLAAS and interested partners can assess the feasibility of using the core indicators for global monitoring, for example, comparability between data reported by countries and ability to aggregate results for global reporting. Some pilot testing can already be conducted in parallel with Phase 2 to inform the selection of core indicators.

The following steps are envisioned for the pilot testing:

1. The draft set of core indicators and the draft common monitoring and review framework will be pilot tested by selected countries in collaboration with partners working at country-level using existing data.
2. WHO, UNICEF, World Bank and other interested partners taking an active role in the pilots will provide enhanced technical support to a small number of countries (around six countries) to undertake the analytical review with a draft set of core indicators and draft monitoring and review framework during the GLAAS 2024/2025 cycle. This will include development of visual representations of the data that can become a standard way of presenting and using the data. In countries where there is sufficient support from national government and development partners, the process of feeding the analytical review into national review processes, such as a joint sector review, will also be piloted.
3. Based on initial results from the pilot countries, GLAAS will assess the data quality and completeness, as well as the comparability of data between countries and potential for aggregation to meet global reporting requirements. Additionally, analyses exploring the dynamic interaction between indicators and WASH systems elements will be conducted to assess the extent to which the indicators and analyses are able to evaluate the strength of the WASH system.
4. Results of pilot testing will be fed back into stakeholder discussions and adjustments made to finalize the core indicators, the common monitoring and review framework, and the process of integrating core indicators into national monitoring systems, as well as the implications for global monitoring tools, methods, and processes.

The work of piloting the core indicators with countries will be conducted in collaboration with key partners. In particular, the piloting of the localization and integration of core indicators into national monitoring systems should be led by national governments and key partners with significant country presence to ensure that the core indicators are appropriately integrated into regular monitoring, that the analytical review is routinely produced as part of the preparation within the national review mechanism, and that the results are used in national decision-making.

Once the set of core indicators and common monitoring and review framework have been finalized, WHO, UNICEF, and other sector partners in countries will provide follow-on technical support to the pilot countries to start integrating the core indicators into their national monitoring systems. These countries will be the “champion countries” and can support peer-to-peer exchange and learning. They are the “early adopter” countries for the Phase 4 “upscaling”.

Based on the results, the GLAAS team will assess possible changes to the GLAAS country survey (new questions and/or modifications to questions) to capture data on the core indicators from participating countries, as well as identify other data sources (e.g., OECD) that could be used to provide data for subsequent GLAAS cycles (2027/2028 onwards).

A companion document or “users’ manual” will be developed to provide guidance on how to conduct an analytical review using the core indicators. It will include visual representations that reflect the core indicators in a way that is easy to understand and allows comparisons over time and between countries that can be used by national governments in review mechanisms and decision-making processes.

*Planned timeframe for Phase 3: November 2025 to August 2026*



#### Phase 4: Upscaling led by countries with aligned support from development partners

The purpose of the final phase is to disseminate the approach and progressively catalyse country leadership to localize and integrate the agreed set of core indicators and the monitoring and review framework into national monitoring systems. While WHO will continue to support and help coordinate this work, the implementation is likely to be led by UNICEF, in close collaboration with the World Bank and other partners with a larger country presence and may vary from country to country.

#### Key activities during this phase include:

- a) WHO and UNICEF, in close collaboration with the World Bank and other major sector partners will provide technical support to national governments that express interest to localize and integrate the core indicators into national sector monitoring and review processes and facilitate peer to peer exchange between countries.
- b) Sector partners will promote the use of the core indicators and common monitoring and review framework and will build support and advocate for use of the core indicators with national governments by linking to high level political processes, such as the Head of States Initiatives, upcoming United Nations Water Conferences (e.g. 2026, 2028) and future in-depth reviews of SDG 6 as part of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and positioning use of the indicators in national monitoring and review systems as a way to measure progress towards high level national commitments.
- c) The GLAAS team will integrate the core indicators into GLAAS cycles from 2027/28 onwards and share the results for the participating countries on the GLAAS data portal.
- d) Drawing on learning from Phase 3, GLAAS will prepare a roadmap for eventual transition from GLAAS country surveys towards the use of country reported data from national monitoring systems.
- e) Consolidation of learning, evidence base, and technical recommendations for consideration in the processes leading up to the negotiation of the post-2030 global sustainable development agenda.

*Planned timeframe for Phase 4:* September 2026 onwards up to 2030, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda/SDGs and GLAAS Strategy 2023-2030. The core indicators and common monitoring and review framework will be reviewed and updated based on the post-2030 global sustainable development agenda.

#### Annex 1. Possible criteria for selection of countries for pilot “cohort” group

- Demand-driven, formal commitment to pilot process by the government (e.g. Heads of State Initiative).
- Dedicated focal person(s) designated by the government.
- At least one or more core partner(s) working in country.
- Availability of resources to support the initiative (government or via partner support).
- Diverse typologies – SDG regional groups, income levels (GDP), fragility classification, sector contexts (WASH coverage levels), demographics (urban vs. rural), governance models (e.g., level of decentralisation of services), water resources availability (e.g. water scarce, drought and flood prone), and other special contexts (e.g. fragile and conflict-affected (FCV), etc.).

## Annex 2. Governance and Coordination Arrangements

It is proposed that the joint initiative will be co-convened and coordinated by WHO and UNICEF, in close collaboration with the World Bank, a select group of country representatives and other major WASH actors. Terms of reference will be developed for the “technical working group” to develop the core indicators (Phase 2) and “task team” for the pilot testing (Phase 3), that will outline roles and responsibilities, estimated time commitments, and other expectations for engagement. Participation is on a voluntary basis, as such organizations are responsible to support any costs related to their involvement.

To enhance collaboration, maximize synergies and avoid duplication, the effort will be coordinated with WASH-related sector working groups, platforms, and initiatives including the following:

- Agenda for Change
- SWA Systems and Financing Working Group
- JMP/ GLAAS Strategic Advisory Group
- UN-Water WASH Expert Group
- IMI-SDG 6 Steering committee
- OECD Water Governance Initiative
- The WHO/UNICEF initiative to identify indicators to globally monitor climate resilient WASH and related efforts around tracking the WASH sector within the Global Goal on Adaptation
- UN-Water GLAAS white paper on improving monitoring of the means of implementation for water and sanitation and in line with the UN Water system wide strategy for water and sanitation

The outcomes and learning from the joint initiative will be shared during sector meetings and conferences including the 2026 and 2028 United Nations Water Conferences, SWA Sector and Finance Minister meetings (SMM/ FMM), Stockholm World Water Week, as well as other relevant global and regional conferences and meetings (e.g. African Water Week, AfricaSan, The UNC Water and Health Conference, G20, etc.).