Knowledge Sharing at the Global Level

For the past 20 years, WSP has been a global learning and knowledge management program that promotes cross-regional work and the building of a global vision on key water and sanitation issues. To strengthen these efforts, WSP has established Global Practice Teams on key issues to foment good practices through knowledge generation, rapid cross-fertilization and enhanced support to the regions.

Comparative Advantages

The Program’s comparative advantages derive from its:

- **Strong track record:** WSP’s ability to evolve as an organization in response to new challenges in the sector largely explains its success of nearly 30 years.

- **Global and regional presence:** The network of WSP operations and offices around the world enables it to draw on global experience quickly and cost effectively and to create links between countries facing similar challenges.

- **Innovative thinking and effective knowledge management:** WSP generates, collects and disseminates local innovative experiences and lessons that can be replicated at the global level.

- **Skill in guiding change and policies in the sector:** The Program strengthens local capacities and supports governments in implementing reforms based on real experiences.

- **Wide network of partnerships:** WSP’s field presence and close coordination with the main actors of the sector, the World Bank and donor agencies facilitate the establishment of partnerships.

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Photographs by World Bank Photo Library; Shagun Mehrotra: WSP-Africa

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The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) began in 1979 as a cooperative effort between the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program to promote cost-effective technologies and models for providing safe water and sanitation in developing countries. Today, WSP has evolved into an international partnership to help the poor gain sustained access to improved water and sanitation services (WSS) and therefore contributes to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for water supply and sanitation. The WSS MDGs are to reduce by half the proportion of people without adequate sanitation by 2015.
The Program’s main funding partners are the governments of Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Bank.

Administered by the World Bank, WSP is supported by the world’s leading donor agencies. It works in partnership with governments at all levels, financial institutions, external donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. It has a global office based in Washington D.C. and operates in more than 20 countries in four regions: Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia.

GLOBAL REACH & LOCAL IMPACT

WSP offers the following products and services:

- Policy Support: Promotes policy reforms and adequate regulatory frameworks; strengthens government institutions and mechanisms to help countries to achieve the MDGs.
- Knowledge management: Generates, validates and disseminates best practices and innovative solutions to water and sanitation problems and innovative solutions to water and sanitation problems and innovative solutions to water and sanitation problems and innovative solutions to water and sanitation problems.
- Sector networking: Assists country and regional networks of professionals to support sector development, building efforts; facilitate partnerships among governments, communities, the private sector and civil society.
- Strategic investment support: Supports investment programs and pilot projects for scaling up WSS programs that seek to improve access, quality and financial sustainability of service delivery to reach the poor through specific and targeted interventions.

Over 2.6 billion people live without basic sanitation services and more than a billion do not have access to safe drinking water.

Africa (WSP-Africa)

Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest challenge to meet the MDGs for water supply and sanitation. Millions of people on the continent are facing an ongoing, endemic water and sanitation crisis that limits economic growth, educational access, health and opportunities for a better life.

WSP-Africa is working with 11 client governments and many partners to promote sector reform and to develop country-owned roadmaps to meet the MDG challenge. Specific country support assists sector coordination and targets strategic areas, such as sanitation in Uganda and Ethiopia, and rural water supply in Benin and Mozambique. Regional thematic work is focused on developing strategic financing approaches and other innovative and practical approaches to address key sector problems. These include scaling up sanitation marketing and hygiene programs, linking WSS to the HIV/AIDS epidemic; assisting utilities to improve services in urban slums and the voice of the unserved; developing sustainable management approaches; and harnessing the potential of the domestic private sector in service delivery.

South Asia (WSP-SA)

South Asia faces significant challenges in meeting the WSS MDGs. In fact, coverage has declined in many areas. No city in the region has a 24-hour water supply, while arsenic contamination and poor maintenance hamper access in rural areas. The key problems are institutional rather than technical or financial. Service providers are not accountable to customers, incentives favor capital works projects rather than sustainable service delivery and subsidies do not benefit the poor. Inadequate knowledge and a lack of systematic policy reform also impede progress. With its emphasis on catalyzing institutional change for more efficient and accountable service delivery, WSP-SA is working to build a critical mass of WSS stakeholders across the region. In Bangladesh, it is building on community-based projects to support new water management institutions; in India, it is promoting the reform of urban policy, fiscal systems, and WSS providers and users; in Pakistan, it is supporting water service institutions within the new decentralized system.

Regional Highlights

Latin America and the Caribbean (WSP-LAC)

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, about 220 million people in Latin America and Caribbean live in areas of poverty and lack access to WSS. Their dual economies where urban development is prioritized (75% of Latin American population lives in urban areas) while rural development receives little attention. The region still needs to integrate the MDGs in government strategies, implement sector reforms and decentralization, support the development of rural and small town WSS and promote gender awareness.

In the region, WSP-LAC supports sector reform by providing technical assistance to sector authorities for the inclusion of MDGs in sector plans and policies, with an emphasis on sanitation. Specific projects include promoting new sustainable WSS management models in small towns in Peru and strengthening local partners and clients for increased sector participation in meeting the MDGs in Honduras and Nicaragua. The Program also promotes a handwashing initiative based on an active public-private partnership in Peru.

East Asia and the Pacific (WSP-EAP)

The East Asia-Pacific region, with a population of 1.8 billion, is broadly on track to meet the overall MDG poverty reduction goal, but there are wide disparities among countries. In the region, 75% of people live in urban areas, and urbanization is likely to be met at current rates of progress. Increasing formal and informal urban growth and consequent environmental degradation are outstripping the progress being made to improve sanitation. Although reformed sector policies are in place in several countries, progress in implementing policies has been slow due to a combination of factors, including a lack of local capacity, a weak institutional framework and limited support for sector reforms from critical stakeholders.

The WSP regional program focuses on promoting sustainable, equitable access to services through the practical design and implementation of improved-WSS policies linked to large-scale sector investments. In Cambodia, the program supports domestic private sector initiatives in WSS. In Indonesia, WSP-EAP provides strategic support for several major rural WSS projects and for developing the urban sanitation sector. In Laos, it promotes institutional and regulatory reform for the sanitation sector; in the Philippines, it works to improve the effectiveness of major investments in WSS; and in Vietnam, it designs and analyzes rural WSS management models in large programs.

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