The Water and Sanitation Program is an international partnership for improving water and sanitation sector policies, practices, and capacities to serve poor people.
The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP)

WSP is an international partnership with a mission to alleviate poverty by helping poor people gain sustained access to improved water and sanitation services.

Working with partners in the field, the Program seeks innovative solutions to the obstacles faced by poor communities, and by providing advice and support to key agencies strives to achieve widespread adoption of these solutions. WSP promotes effective dialogue and exchange of knowledge on best practices on water and sanitation issues for capacity building and sector reform.

WSP works through partnerships with governments at all levels, financial partners, international development agencies, NGOs and the private sector in more than 20 countries in Africa, Latin America, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia. Headquartered in Washington DC, WSP is administered by the World Bank, and operates through four regional offices in India, Indonesia, Kenya and Peru.

The WSS challenge in Africa

Africa is facing an ongoing, endemic water and sanitation crisis that debilitates and kills in large numbers, limiting economic growth, educational access, and life opportunities. Service development has not been able to keep up with the pace of population growth. Of the 753 million people living in Sub-Saharan Africa only 56% use improved water sources (80% urban and 42% rural), the lowest regional coverage in the world. Just 37% of the population has access to adequate sanitation (53% urban and 28% rural).

The MDG targets for water and sanitation services have led to an unprecedented mobilization of African policy makers, sector actors and their development partners. However, Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole lags behind other world regions in meeting global targets, largely attributable to many countries either steeped in, or emerging from conflicts and political turmoil. Significant progress is noted in some countries where the drive for aid harmonization is reinvigorating sector coordination and has led, in a number of cases to the establishment of basket funding mechanisms for part or whole of the WSS sector. The impact of increased sector funding has, however, been muted by the combination of inequitable allocations and slow implementation performance. Implementation of institutional reforms and the building of capacity related to decentralization and managerial accountability needs to be sped up. Governments and their partners need to improve sector M&E systems, rationalize the WSS sector oversight framework and move to more sustainable forms of financing.

WSP-Africa’s role

The role of WSP-Africa is to assist its clients and partners to solve problems by providing advice, bringing in comparative practical experience and assisting local leadership. WSP helps develop policies and strategies, finds innovative solutions, promotes best practices, and develops related capacity. WSP-Africa strives to be a valued, high-level source of impartial advice and experience, based on comparative knowledge of what works.
Through its field presence and its networks, WSP can be a flexible and responsive local partner able to facilitate local policy dialogues. WSP-Africa is also in a position to test promising ideas, document lessons from their application, and encourage adoption within larger sector investment programs or projects.

Country-level support generally follows the sequence of assisting clients in planning and implementing reforms, developing strategies (including specific pathways to reach the WSS MDGs), in strengthening sector coordination and alignment with lead agencies and supporting the growth of investment programs. Support is also given to strengthening national sector information systems and helping clients develop effective sector communication strategies.

### Supporting African countries to meet WSS MDGs

WSP-Africa strategies to get Africa back on track to meet MDGs include:

- Deepening reform and restructuring institutions to attract capacity
- Developing specific WSS MDG roadmaps and increasing implementation support
- Developing specific and approaches instruments for fragile states
- Improving sector monitoring
- Developing sector finance strategies
- Special focus on sanitation and hygiene

### Comparative advantage

WSP-Africa has established privileged and close relationships with many African governments and partners. Field presence is established through deployment of senior sector planners supported by local experts and experienced sector specialists based in the focus countries.

The Program is recognized as a leading source of applied research and expertise on comparative WSS policy and practices. Its knowledge development strengths include:

- **Sector financing and monitoring** to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability and to broaden funding sources.
- **Rural and small towns** WSS programs and related policies and O&M arrangements making best use of local private sector operators.
- **Pro-poor urban utility reform** including service delivery to informal urban settlements.
- **Sanitation & hygiene programs** and the promotion and rolling out of social marketing approaches to household sanitation and hygiene including hand washing.
- **Community-based and gender-sensitive** approaches and tools applicable to the sector as whole or to respective WSS sub-sectors.
- **Communication for sector reform and for advocacy.**

As an honest broker without a lending or project agenda, yet with many donor shareholders, the Program frequently plays a leading role in improving sector coordination. Its multi-lingual field-based network promotes the exchange of ideas across Africa and beyond. It is on hand to coach clients through reform programs, create leverage from local partnerships, and bring grass-root level experience to global attention. WSP’s location in the World Bank has enhanced its visibility and provides opportunities to influence sector policies and support operational programs.

### Financial partners

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Ireland, Luxemborg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, UNDP, United States of America, World Bank, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation