



**U.S. Agency for International Development
Bureau for Food Security
Request for Information – WASH Research and Learning**

Issuance Date: Thursday, August 13, 2020

Response Due Date: Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 12:00pm EDT

The United States Government represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Center for Water Security, Sanitation and Hygiene in the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security is in the process of designing a new activity or activities to answer critical implementation research questions in the WASH sector. We are seeking public COMMENTS on the below proposed concept to inform the design process.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY, issued solely for information and planning purposes, and responses do not constitute a proposal. It is not a solicitation and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government or USAID to issue any solicitation or to ultimately award a contract or assistance agreement on the basis of this RFI. If a Solicitation is issued, it will be announced publicly later, and all interested parties must respond to that Solicitation announcement separately from any response to this announcement.

Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary and USAID will not pay respondents for the information provided in response to this RFI. Information, comments, and suggestions received will be reviewed and may be incorporated into future solicitation(s) but USAID will not provide direct response to any individual submissions, and will not publicly release the responses.

All information provided will become the property of USAID, will not be returned, and will not be released publicly. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for USAID's own purposes. Proprietary information must not be sent. USAID reserves the right to, or not to, incorporate any, some, or none of the comments received from this RFI into any subsequent solicitations or design documents.

This RFI does not restrict the Government's approach on a future solicitation. No decision has been made regarding the number of awards or the type of instruments that will be used (e.g. acquisition or assistance). For this reason, this RFI will be posted on both the Federal grants website, www.grants.gov and the Contract Opportunities website at www.beta.sam.gov.

Submission Instructions Response Requirements

Please provide one (1) electronic copy of your response in Microsoft Word format as a single e-mail attachment to **Ms. Kelly Miskowski** (kmiskowski@usaid.gov). Please submit response via e-mail only by **Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 12:00 PM EDT**.

Responses should include the following:

1. Cover page, not to exceed one (1) page, that includes:
 - a. Organization name and address
 - b. Point of contact name and contact information
 - c. Size and type of organization, including, if applicable, U.S. small business or other status
 - d. DUNS number
 - e. Brief statement of interest that indicates the organization's interest in applying as a prime or subcontractor. If a team or consortium is envisioned, please provide the names of the potential partner organizations.
 - f. Whether your organization is a "New Partner" or "Underutilized Partner" as defined in the [New Partnerships Initiative](#).
 - g. Whether your organization holds a GSA OASIS or other Multiple Award Schedule that covers the work requested here, and the name of said schedule.
2. USAID invites the public to submit comments, suggestions, and other information for consideration regarding its approach to WASH research. Comments are not to exceed four (4) pages. No pages beyond this limit (including Annexes) will be reviewed. Responders do not have to address all of the points mentioned below but may respond only to those areas of greatest interest or potential contribution.
3. Research and learning institutions and other potential implementers based within countries or regions where research is likely to take place are particularly encouraged to respond to this RFI.

USAID is interested in feedback on the following, with the most important areas of input listed first:

- a. Your organization or potential consortium of organizations' capacity to respond to the three activity components and specific research focus areas highlighted below, and which specific focus areas (Component 1) and services (Component 2) are of interest as a package of components.
- b. Organizational structure and partnerships to achieve both desired research outcomes as well as *other proposed services*.
- c. USAID's proposed approach to dividing research themes and areas into specific procurements/focus areas, per Component 1 below.
- d. Potential methods for conducting the research highlighted under each focal area.
- e. Approaches (including optimal techniques to organize or structure partnerships between researchers and implementers) to hasten stand-up of research activities, and your organization(s)' experience implementing these approaches.

- f. Approaches to ensure uptake of learning resulting from research (within and beyond USAID) in decision-making, policy and programs.
- g. Approaches to build the capacity of USAID OUs and local learning institutions to conduct research and use evidence in decision-making.

No other documents or information are requested at this time. USAID asks respondents to not send any additional information other than what is requested above and to adhere to the page limits mentioned.

Program Background and Anticipated Components

Background

Water and sanitation issues are among the most pressing global concerns of the next decade, with more than 2 billion people still living without access to basic water services, even more living without hygienic sanitation, and water stress increasingly affecting some of the world's most vulnerable populations. Water and sanitation underpin the wellbeing of populations, household assets and livelihoods of vulnerable communities the world over, providing a critical foundation for meaningful progress along the humanitarian to development continuum--including in the face of COVID-19.

To underscore the importance of this critical issue and to marshal a whole-of-government response, the [U.S. Government issued the inaugural Global Water Strategy \(GWS\)](#) in 2017 that envisions a water-secure world, where people and nations have the water they need to be healthy, prosperous and resilient. Within the GWS, USAID's Water and Development Plan provides a strategic overview of the Agency's intended contribution to the GWS, and sets out a goal of increasing the availability and sustainable management of safe water and sanitation for the underserved and most vulnerable. To meet this goal and to ensure effective programming with taxpayer dollars, USAID is launching its first Water and Development Implementation Plan Research Agenda with the intention of expanding the evidence base about what works in water and sanitation programming and under what conditions.

Purpose

The purpose of the activity or activities as envisioned under this RFI is to design, carry-out and ensure use of implementation research¹ on the research questions identified below, and to provide high-quality and sector-specific analytical, technical and evaluation services to USAID missions and Operating Units. This will allow USAID to address critical knowledge and learning gaps related to achieving USAID's goal of increasing the availability and sustainable management of safe water and sanitation for the underserved and most vulnerable, especially within countries designated as High Priority or Aligned for investments authorized by the 2014 Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act.

Scope of USAID Research and Learning Activities

USAID is considering one or more activities organized around the different technical focus areas presented below as part of Component 1. USAID envisions all activities addressing at least Components 1 and 3 (implementation research and its use by decision-makers and

¹ We use the word implementation research to indicate that we are seeking to fund actionable research that supports the design and implementation of effective water security, sanitation, and hygiene development programming. Relevant examples of recent USAID-funded implementation research include, for example [Sustaining Rural Water: A Comparative Study of Maintenance Models for Community-Managed Schemes](#) (2019) , and [Enterprise Viability Case Study: A Retrospective Analysis of Rural Sanitation Enterprises in Bihar, India](#) (2020).

development partners), and envisions one or more activities also providing on-demand technical assistance (Component 2).

Components

Component 1: Implementation Research

The research activity or activities will implement targeted research activities in partnership with other development partners, NGOs, USAID field activities and local governments. Research may take many forms, and multiple methods, including both qualitative and quantitative research, are expected. The key research that will be implemented as a part of this activity/these activities are summarized below. The envisioned research activities represent one set of contributions towards filling evidence gaps identified in the Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene Implementation Research Agenda, which documents critical water, sanitation, and hygiene research areas identified, validated, and prioritized through literature review and an extensive set of expert consultations.

Technical Focus Areas

The following research questions are organized into four main areas of focus, which may track to separate research activities. Exploring gender and inclusion dimensions of each question will be critical to the success of the research and its relevance. Private sector engagement is another cross-cutting dimension of interest for all research questions and proposed research focus areas:

Focus Area 1: On-site Sanitation Services and Hygiene

In rural areas, small towns and informal settlements, people continue to rely on on-site sanitation. However, progress in this area still lags, with one in three people lacking a hygienic toilet in their homes, and two in five households lacking a handwashing station with soap and water. New approaches that move beyond conventional behavior change and demand generation show promise, but still need to be tested. Research to fill the evidence gaps and questions below have been identified as critical to informing how USAID and partners can help poor and underserved people and communities end open defecation, work towards universal safely managed sanitation, and create hygiene behavior change that lasts.

- 1. How can we target, integrate and phase behavior change and market-based activities in different contexts in order to achieve universal sanitation coverage within an administrative area?*

The WASH sector generally, and USAID in particular, has invested heavily in learning about some of the most common interventions, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and market-based sanitation. However, the sector is only beginning to understand how these activities can be combined, integrated, and phased appropriately to reach everyone in large-scale, area-wide programs. Addressing this knowledge gap may include learning about whether more explicit sales campaigns should occur before/after triggering, which actors (public, private or

non-profit) should carry out each activity, or how to approach customer segmentation. Additionally, the sector must learn how monitoring can be improved and how this data can be used for adaptive implementation, exploring policy reforms, or generating stronger political leadership.

2. How do changes in the physical environment enable key hygiene behaviors? What other complementary activities may be needed to enable sustained behavior change?

Frequent and habitual behaviors are significantly influenced by context, cues and the physical environment.² Running water available on premises is ideal to enable many domestic hygiene practices, such as handwashing, but how does the location (inside or outside the home) or intermittent availability of this service impact its use? Are there other desirable products which can enable key behaviors where running water is not feasible? More evidence is needed on how to apply scalable and effective interventions across all target behaviors and contexts. Where communication plays a role, what is the required dose, frequency, and duration required to sustain behaviors, and is this going to be cost effective? Social and behavior change research in WASH must be more customized to the individual behaviors. Under-emphasized domestic hygiene behaviors (such as animal feces management, or purchase decisions like piped water connection or latrine emptying) may be prioritized in SBC programs but require a deeper understanding of the behavioral determinants in order to inform intervention design.

3. How can interventions aimed at professionalizing fecal sludge management (FSM) service providers best contribute to their business viability?

The WASH sector has traditionally taken distinctly different approaches to sanitation in urban and rural areas, however, this distinction is increasingly blurry as rural communities urbanize and as small towns grow increasingly dense, making fecal sludge management all the more important. Programs focused on professionalizing FSM service providers have struggled to make these businesses independently viable. Some factors that legitimize FSM businesses can increase operating costs (such as safe treatment or disposal), while efficiencies in revenue generation do not always make up the difference. Some promising developments have been piloted (scheduled desludging, price transparency, technological innovations, beneficial reuse, etc.), but robust evidence is still lacking, including on the role that the overall structure and regulation of the sector can play in influencing FSM business viability.

Research is needed to explore effective approaches to building FSM service provider business viability, regulation of collection, dumping, and treatment, and investment in infrastructure. New interventions also need to be explored to ensure that enterprises promote gender equity and to

² <https://globalhandwashing.org/learn/key-topics/behavior-change/>

retain an effective and efficient workforce. An analysis of broader factors in the market system is also necessary to understand the incentives at play for achieving area-wide inclusive sanitation.

4. *What is the role of subsidies in area-wide sanitation programs? What should drive the size, timing, and modality of subsidies?*

Reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people has been a fundamental challenge in most sanitation programs, including CLTS and market-based sanitation approaches, struggling to reach people with disabilities, widows, and people excluded based on caste, religion, ethnicity, location, or gender. Although demonized in the sanitation sector for more than a decade, targeted subsidies appear to be a necessary piece to the intervention mix. Subsidies can be structured in many ways, from the household level to the national sector level. They also must be carefully phased and targeted when combined with demand creation and market-based activities. These nuances are poorly understood in many contexts and require intense engagement with government institutions, regulators, and private sector actors, making them difficult to test and evaluate. Exploring behavior change at the institutional and political levels may be one aspect warranting further exploration.

Focus Area 2: Sustainable Rural Water Resources and Services

Sustainability of rural water services has long been a challenge in the sector, and is under further threat as a result of water scarcity due to climate change and population growth. Over the past decade, studies have repeatedly cited non-functionality figures for rural water schemes of between 30 and 40 percent³. Addressing the challenge of functionality will require a focus on operations and maintenance models, governance, and associated financing to ensure that services continue to be delivered, while simultaneously addressing the sustainability of the underlying resource base through enhanced water resources management and ensuring that widespread issues with poor and declining water quality are more holistically addressed.

Research to fill evidence gaps and questions below have been identified as critical to inform how USAID and its partners can more sustainably manage water resources and watersheds and help service providers sustainably extend at least basic services to rural poor people and communities, while improving water service quality and with the aim of advancing towards safely managed services.

1. *Under what contexts, including the level of support or oversight given, are community-managed water services more likely to be sustainable? What alternative management models exist when these enabling factors are not in place?*

³ World Bank (2017). “Sustainability Assessment of Rural Water Service Delivery Models: Findings of Multi-Country Review.” Washington, D.C.

For the past several decades, conventional approaches to maintenance for rural water services have largely been based on voluntary community-based management (CBM) with communities taking on the burden of tariff collection, operations, maintenance themselves, with limited, if any, support from external agencies, local governments or technical operators. However, these volunteer committees struggle to ensure that rural water infrastructure is adequately maintained, with “fix on failure” becoming the default approach in most cases, resulting in lengthy downtimes and more costly repairs.

The major questions in this area are not about whether traditional, unsupported, volunteer community management is an appropriate service delivery model -evidence shows that CBM without support structures or capacity strengthening will struggle to sustain high levels of service demanded by the SDGs^{27,4}. Instead, further research, building on USAID’s work under the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership, is needed to inform different possible arrangements of management roles, the external support provided to communities and the appropriateness of these management models in different socioeconomic and institutional contexts, including in the face of severe shocks like droughts and floods. It will also be important to explore alternatives to CBM in contexts where the required support and enabling environment is not available.

2. What factors and models improve routine water quality monitoring and water safety in rural, resource-poor environments?

The introduction of “safely managed” drinking water in SDG 6.1 has renewed emphasis on water quality as a global priority. Achieving this goal requires that governments and water service providers prioritize both routine monitoring and actions to improve water quality. Technologies and methods for both water quality testing and treatment are well developed, yet applying them consistently and at scale remains a considerable challenge, especially in rural and low-resource environments.

Recent research has found that water quality is often poor in rural areas in lower income countries⁵, monitoring is not generally performed consistently, even when dedicated resources are provided to facilitate monitoring⁶. More information is needed around what factors can enable or incentivize routine water quality monitoring by service providers or service authorities in rural areas, and use of the data to improve the quality of drinking water and drinking water services. There is a need to better understand the options for water quality monitoring systems

⁴ Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership (2019). Sustaining Rural Water: A Comparative Study Of Maintenance Models For Community-Managed Schemes.

⁵ Damania, Richard; Desbureaux, Sébastien; Rodella, Aude-Sophie; Russ, Jason; Zaveri, Esha. 2019. Quality Unknown : The Invisible Water Crisis. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁶ Peletz, Rachel, et al. (2018). Why do Water Quality Monitoring Programs Succeed Or Fail? A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Regulated Testing Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. Vol. 221.

and how these function under different contexts. Research under this question will also examine the effectiveness of approaches to ensuring monitoring data is acted on and water quality is improved.

3. *What are the priority obstacles to address in order to implement holistic water resources planning (such as within an Integrated Water Resources Management framework) in low and middle income countries, and how can these obstacles be overcome?*

USAID frequently assists partner countries and communities to adopt IWRM, and to develop and implement complementary WRM plans. Prioritizing the key obstacles at the margin that hamper our ability to effectively implement IWRM planning and the implementation and enforcement of such plans is critical, recognizing that true success in WRM hinges on fundamental shifts in power dynamics among and between water users, especially the poor and vulnerable, and including ecosystems and wildlife. This includes the need to better understand what drives the enforcement of policies, laws, and conventions; what barriers exist to attracting funding (both public and private) for WRM; learning more about the enabling conditions for stakeholder empowerment and capacity-building; and increased understanding of different approaches to water tenure or water rights and the relationship between tenure and equitable allocation and access. Understanding how to develop and foster governance structures and approaches that are adaptive to ecological and social change, including uncertainties associated with climate variability and change, is also particularly important.

Focus Area 3: Urban WASH Services and Policy Environment

While rural programming will remain a core focus of USAID water and sanitation programming moving forward, the rapid pace of urbanization requires increasing attention on urban services and utilities, particularly in dense informal settlements and secondary cities that are often served by informal providers. In urban areas, USAID's emphasis has not been on building large scale infrastructure, but has focused on how to best structure the policy environment, regulations and incentives to support the expansion and sustainable provision of services to all. However, many questions remain about what approaches to improving urban WASH services and governance are best suited to different contexts.

Research to fill the evidence gaps and questions below have been identified as critical to informing how USAID and partners can accelerate reaching peri-urban and urban residents with reliable, quality sanitation and water services that are critical to improving public health, preventing infectious disease outbreaks, and enabling economic activities.

1. *What are the best approaches to regulate small and informal service providers? How can this be done without disrupting the service they often provide to the poorest and most vulnerable?*

In developing countries, small and informal providers (SIPs) play a vital role in extending water and sanitation coverage to segments of the population not connected to the main utility networks. For example, private and/or informal providers of bottled water, tankers and pit emptying services are prevalent in many contexts. However, SIPs are often not officially recognized or regulated and can operate outside water quality and environmental standards, which may pose public health risks. Recent research suggests that bringing SIPs into the regulatory fold would allow for regular oversight that could dramatically improve quality and services⁷. More evidence is needed to understand what it would take to incorporate SIPs into a country's WASH regulatory framework, including potential legal and institutional changes.

It is important to better understand the costs and benefits of regulation and support to SIPs, as these providers play an important role in delivering services in many contexts. SIPs often provide services to the poorest and most vulnerable, so it is critical that regulation does not have unintended negative effects on these populations⁸. Therefore, a key component of addressing this question will be to better understand how to regulate SIPs so that they can continue to help expand services to the poorest and most vulnerable.

2. *How do enabling factors, local context, and other conditions influence the development and implementation of water quality and sanitation regulations, policies, and processes in urban areas?*

Many countries have standards for drinking water quality. The World Health Organization (WHO) provides detailed scientific standards and guidelines for implementation with which countries can align.⁹ However, there is limited evidence on the degree to which countries follow these guidelines and enforce regulations. The monitoring and enforcement of water quality regulation is influenced by many factors beyond the formal policies and institutions in place. Understanding the regulatory incentives used to motivate actors and the coherence of these within the broader political context of the sector is critical to influencing water quality regulation. Because political contexts vary widely, multi-country studies are needed to assess enabling factors, local context, and culturally sensitive conditions that influence the development and implementation of water quality regulations, policies, and standards.

In contrast to water quality regulations, the regulation of sanitation is often neglected even at the level of having formal regulations passed. Many countries still lack explicit policies, minimum

⁷ Trémolet, Sophie and Jonathan Halpern. 2006. Regulation of Water and Sanitation Services: Getting Better Service to Poor People. Output-Based Aid Working Paper, 8. Washington, DC: World Bank

⁸ Trémolet, Sophie and Catherine Hunt. 2006. Taking Account of the Poor in Water Sector Regulation. Water and Sanitation Program Working Note, no. 11. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁹ Developing drinking-water quality regulations and standards: general guidance with a special focus on countries with limited resources. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018.

standards, roles or compliance mechanisms; this is at least partially because responsibility for sanitation is often split between multiple ministries¹⁰. Policymakers, sanitation authorities, and service providers must make decisions about managing excreta from both sewerred and on-site sanitation facilities in urban environments, complicating the planning for infrastructure and other investments. It is critical to develop a knowledge base on how countries have (or have not) incorporated sanitation standards into their legal and regulatory environments, and to what effect. Evidence is also needed on the key constraints and challenges to implement sanitation regulations, along with data on associated costs.

3. *What are the enabling factors and constraints most important to establishing successful schemes for domestic source water protection, such as payment for ecosystem services or the establishment of other environmental taxes or fees, especially in low income contexts?*

Green and resilient water infrastructure can benefit many sectors, but may be particularly beneficial for protecting drinking water systems, especially those that supply the water for large concentrations of people and industry. There are rising challenges to the freshwater resources that are used as source waters for domestic supplies for growing populations. These include land use changes, pollution, and climate variability and change. As a result, reservoirs are shrinking, supplies are critically low or unreliable during prolonged dry and hot seasons, and more resources are required for treatment to bring water supplies up to acceptable quality standards. For many growing population centers, deforestation and degradation increase pollution, accelerate erosion and reduce water quality and reliability. Targeted land protection and restoration measures have the potential to ease pressures on critical source waters used by cities and growing towns. These solutions may be the most cost-effective way to secure reliable and safe water for drinking water systems over the long run, though more information on the return on investment for such interventions is also needed in low income settings. Finding innovative ways to establish sustainable funding and management schemes for source water protection has been challenging, particularly in the countries in which USAID works. Implementation research aimed at identifying effective models and associated enabling factors and constraints will bolster progress on protecting and restoring watersheds that provide source water for growing cities and population centers.

Focus Area 4: WASH Sector Finance

Filling a large sector finance gap will be critical to achieve universal access to sustainable WASH services and to improving WRM, and knowledge to fill this gap has shifted dramatically in recent years. The advent of new and innovative forms of available resources, especially in the context of blended public and private finances, have enabled the sector to think beyond simply

¹⁰ Water Aid. 2011. The Sanitation Problem: What Can and Should the Health Sector Do?

taxes, tariffs and transfers. Government, utilities, and banks now understand they must all collaborate to create water finance markets that are calibrated to local conditions. While water utilities in many developing countries have begun to access commercial finance due to higher creditworthiness and various de-risking tools, domestic public resources are still a critical component of sector finance, as not all services or providers will be able to utilize commercial finance. Mobilizing domestic resources requires the ability to raise tax revenue, appropriately budget, monitor finances and execute funds. Citizen advocacy for services is one driver of domestic resource mobilization, as is a country's capacity to track finances and utilize information for improved budgeting.

Research to fill the evidence gaps and questions below have been identified as critical to informing how USAID and partners can work to bring additional financing and thereby accelerate expansion of high quality and sustainable services.

1. *What are the enabling and constraining factors to structuring funds that blend public, donor and private financing to reduce risk and enable increased finance for service providers?*

Using public finance (from donors or governments) to make investments more secure and digestible for private investors shows promise in attracting private capital that would not otherwise invest directly in developing countries. This type of blended finance is increasingly being tested for WASH – via pooling bankable projects and risk management tools – and the initial results are promising. Blended finance addresses barriers to investment in developing countries – specifically, the lack of creditworthy borrowers who would otherwise not be able to access capital markets. While interest in blended finance is growing, the majority of the work to date on the topic has focused on describing the potential for blended finance and case studies. Less has been documented on lessons learned, best practices, and challenges in applying blended finance to specific geographies and contexts. Further study of the role of public policy in creating, monitoring, and evaluating blended finance is also needed.

Component 2: Provide on-demand technical assistance on WASH and WRM research and analytics to USAID Operating Units

To advance state of the art knowledge on WASH programming approaches and to provide specialized expertise, missions and USAID/Washington bureaus sometimes require expert external support on WASH research, learning and analytics. USAID bilateral missions program the vast majority of Agency WASH and other associated funding used for WRM, and are likely to identify research or analytic needs specific to the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector, but beyond those questions highlighted under the focus areas of Component 1 of this RFI. The research activity or activities envisioned must retain the skills and expertise to provide targeted

short-term technical assistance (STTA) to USAID missions, or operating units for research, analysis and/or evaluations. Illustrative tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Carry-out priority water, sanitation, and hygiene implementation research identified by USAID Missions
- Background analyses to inform WASH, WRM, and water-related project designs and strategic approaches.
- Formative research on barriers and entry points for WASH and WRM programming
- Market analysis for WASH products and services
- Forecasting WASH sector trends and associated impacts on health, economic growth and other high-level outcomes as defined by USAID
- Assessments of new technologies or implementation approaches in the sector
- Technical assistance on monitoring, including the implementation of baseline and endline surveys to measure outcomes.
- Performance and/or impact evaluations of WASH or WRM programs and activities
- Technical assistance to OUs on developing sector research and learning agendas and/or activities

We note that provision of some of the services under Component 2 may have implications for organizational conflicts of interest, and USAID may include provisions, in accordance with the principles of FAR subpart 9.5 and USAID policy, precluding contractors or awardees from furnishing, as a prime or subcontractor or otherwise, implementation services under any contract or task order that results in response to findings, proposals, or recommendations in an evaluation report written by the contractor. this preclusion will apply to any such awards made within 18 months of usaid accepting the report, unless the head of the contracting activity, in consultation with usaid's competition advocate, authorizes a waiver (in accordance FAR 9.503) determining that preclusion of the contractor from the implementation work would not be in the government's interest. In addition, provisions may be included that require awardee or contractors to not use or make available any information obtained about another organization under the contract in the preparation of proposals or other documents in response to any solicitation for a contract or task order.

Component 3: Use of Evidence in Decision-making

The activity (or activities) will need to ensure that key findings and recommendations from the research under Component 1 are widely disseminated and used by USAID missions, local governments, development partners and other WASH implementers. Engagement with these audiences will need to begin from the start of the activity to allow for co-creation of research and ensure relevancy of outputs. This will include standing up and managing an advisory group/board to help identify evidence gaps and periodically review and advise direction of the research undertaken through Component 1. It will also include appropriate engagement with local partners and in-country learning platforms and working groups, as appropriate, in addition

to providing support for building capacity within the sector (within and outside USAID) to generate and use research and evidence in decision-making.

The activity will work with USAID/Washington and leverage existing communications platforms to broadly disseminate findings. Peer-reviewed journal papers and other knowledge products, co-authored with USAID, will also be expected outputs.