



# **Global Water Strategy**

## **USAID Plan**

# USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1	<b>USAID Agency Plan Contents</b>	
	<b>Introduction and Agency Context</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>USAID Contributions to the Global Water Strategy and Alignment with other USG Policies and Strategies</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Strategic Objective 1: Strengthened Water and Sanitation Sector Governance, Financing, Institutions, and Markets</b>	<b>6</b>
2	IR 1.1 Inclusive laws, policies, and regulations developed, strengthened, and implemented	7
3	IR 1.2 Public and private financing effectively targeted and mobilized	8
4	IR 1.3 Improved capacity and performance of regional, national, and sub-national institutions	9
5	IR 1.4 Participatory, data-driven, and transparent decision making to advance accountability, equity, and efficiency	10
	<b>Strategic Objective 2: Increased and More Equitable Access to Safe, Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Drinking Water and Sanitation Services and Adoption of Hygiene Practices</b>	<b>11</b>
7	IR 2.1 Increased area-wide access to safe and climate-resilient sanitation services	11
8	IR 2.2 Increased access to safe, equitable, accessible, and climate-resilient drinking water services	12
9		
10	IR 2.3 Improved performance and climate resilience of water and sanitation service providers	14
11		
12	IR 2.4 Increased adoption of key hygiene practices	14
	<b>Strategic Objective 3: Improved Climate-Resilient Conservation and Management of Freshwater Resources and Associated Ecosystems</b>	<b>15</b>
13	IR 3.1 Water resources more equitably allocated and efficiently used	15
14	IR 3.2 Enhanced water quality, quantity, and reliability through watershed conservation, restoration, and green infrastructure	17
15		
16	IR 3.3 Water resources resilient to climate-related shocks and stresses	18
	<b>Strategic Objective 4: Anticipate and Reduce Conflict and Fragility Related to Water</b>	<b>18</b>
17	IR 4.1 Strengthened capacity to predict, prepare for, and adapt to shocks impacting water and sanitation systems in fragile settings	19
18		
19	IR 4.2 Addressed humanitarian water and sanitation needs	20
20	IR 4.3 Strengthened cooperation and reduced conflict over water	21
21	IR 4.4 Strengthened coherence across humanitarian, development, and peace approaches to water and sanitation programming	22
22		
	<b>USAID Approaches and Commitments to Mainstreaming Global Water Strategy Operational Principles</b>	<b>22</b>
23	Principle 1: Work through and strengthen global, national, and local systems	23

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1	Principle 2: Focus on meeting the needs of marginalized or underserved people and	
2	communities, and those in vulnerable situations	23
3	Principle 3: Leverage research, learning, and innovation	24
4	Principle 4: Incorporate resilience to shocks and stressors in planning and operations	24
	<b>Implementing Across the USAID Program Cycle</b>	<b>24</b>
5	Designation of High Priority and Strategic Priority Countries and Regions	25
6	High Priority Countries	25
7	Strategic Priority Countries	26
8	Strategic Planning	26
9	Reflecting the Global Water Strategy in Regional and Country Development Cooperation	
10	Strategies	26
11	Developing Individualized Plans for High Priority Countries	27
12	Program and Activity Design and Implementation	27
13	Design objectives	27
14	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL) and Research	28
15	Additional Resources and Processes to Support Strategic Programs and Activities	29
16	Programmatic Budgeting and Resources	30
	<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>31</b>
17	Global Water Coordinator	31
18	Water and Sanitation Technical Working Group	31
19	Mission Water and Sanitation Leads	32
20	Water Leadership Council	32
	<b>Policy Coherence</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>Global Water Strategy Glossary</b>	<b>34</b>
21		
22		

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

### 1 Introduction and Agency Context

2 As the U.S. government's (USG) principal leader, coordinator, and provider of international  
3 development assistance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) advances  
4 national security and economic prosperity while demonstrating American values and goodwill  
5 abroad. In partnership with the Department of State, USAID co-leads the USG's efforts to  
6 implement the Water for the World Act (WftWA) and the U.S. Global Water Strategy (GWS).

7 USAID's investments in water security under the GWS are critical to advancing prosperity,  
8 stability, resilience and health in the places they are needed most. Reliable, sustainable access  
9 to safe water and sanitation are crucial building blocks for healthy, productive populations,  
10 thriving businesses and markets, and strong and equitable economies. Water security bolsters  
11 resilience in the face of climate change and other shocks and stressors, while affordable,  
12 reliable water and sanitation services extended equitably can enhance the stability of societies  
13 by reducing conflict and building legitimacy and trust in democratic institutions.

14 During the five-year implementation of the first U.S. Global Water Strategy (2017–2022), USAID  
15 exceeded its targets to provide 15 million people with access to safe drinking water and 8 million  
16 people with access to sanitation, while expanding programming and results to strengthen sector  
17 governance and improve water resources management. Yet, we know that investments need to  
18 stretch further and contribute to more lasting and transformational changes: Water insecurity  
19 remains one of the world's greatest challenges. One in four people continue to lack safely  
20 managed drinking water in their homes and nearly half the world's population lacks safely  
21 managed sanitation; without major improvements in water resources management, two thirds of  
22 people globally are expected to face water shortages by 2050 due to growing demand, climate  
23 change, pollution, and watershed degradation.

24 This Plan outlines how USAID will scale its impact under the second Global Water Strategy by  
25 supporting partner countries and communities to (1) increase access to water and sanitation  
26 services that are more sustainable, climate-resilient, and equitable, (2) scale up its work to build  
27 a lasting and strong enabling environment for water security by strengthening institutions and  
28 growing the financing available to support the sector, (3) expand the scope and impact of its  
29 work on improving water resources management and conserving and restoring watersheds to  
30 reduce water stress and build resilience to climate change and other shocks and stressors, and  
31 (4) address water-related drivers and vulnerabilities to conflict and instability by improving  
32 linkages and coherence between humanitarian, peace-building and development efforts in the  
33 sector and improving preparedness to water-related shocks and stressors in fragile contexts.

### 34 USAID Contributions to the Global Water Strategy and Alignment with other 35 USG Policies and Strategies

36 USAID will contribute to each of the four Strategic Objectives of the GWS and has developed  
37 Intermediate Results that detail the approach the Agency will take to achieve each one (Exhibit

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1) The Plan also details tangible actions the Agency will take to implement and integrate the Strategy's principles across its programming.

USAID has set ambitious targets for its work under the GWS through 2027 (Exhibit 2). During this Strategy period, USAID will:

- Work with partner countries to **directly provide 20 million people with sustainable drinking water services and 20 million people with sustainable sanitation services.** The Agency has set equal targets for drinking water and sanitation services to elevate sanitation, which has been historically deprioritized. USAID will pursue these targets across stable and fragile contexts, and at least half of the total number of people reached will be people gaining first-time access to basic services.<sup>i</sup>
- Work with partner countries to **strengthen more than 1,000 water and sanitation institutions** across at least 30 countries, including all High Priority Countries. Strengthening institutions is a foundation for improving governance, building local capacity, and enabling local systems that lead to lasting change.
- **Mobilize 1 billion dollars of financing for water and sanitation beyond direct USAID investments.** USG investments represent a small fraction of the financing needed to sustainably extend water and sanitation access to all while addressing the broader challenges of water scarcity and stress. USAID's ambitious financing target reflects the critical need to more effectively leverage our direct investments with other sources of funding.

As U.S. government policies and strategies align with the Strategy as a whole, the approaches and targets set in this Plan contribute to and align with government-wide as well as USAID Agency-specific strategies, policies, and mandates. USAID programming under the Plan contributes to the three pillars of the whole-of-government [White House Water Security Action Plan](#) on universal and equitable access to water and sanitation systems, sustainable management and protection of water resources and ecosystems, and multilateral action to promote cooperation and water security. The emphasis on equity and inclusion throughout the Results Framework aligns with the [White House Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Workforce](#), and the [Agency's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility \(DEIA\) Strategy](#) and [Equity Action Plan](#). The targets set in this Plan also contribute to the targets set in [USAID's Climate Strategy](#) (2022–2030), including improving the climate resilience of people, mobilizing climate finance, and supporting partners to achieve systemic changes that increase participation and inclusion. Similarly, other USAID Agency-specific strategies, policies, and mandates contribute to the achievement of this Plan.

Other key policies and strategies with a bidirectional relationship to USAID's Plan are noted in the Policy Coherence section.

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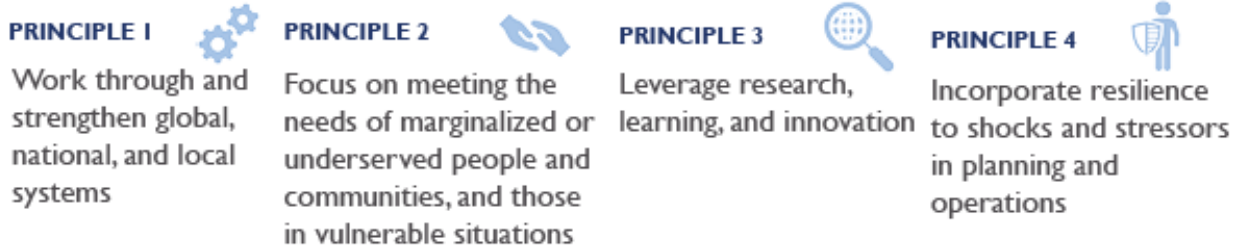
## 1 Exhibit 1: Global Water Strategy Results Framework and Principles with USAID intermediate results.

**VISION:** A water-secure world

**GOAL:** To improve health, prosperity, stability, and resilience through sustainable and equitable water resources management and access to safe drinking water and sanitation services and hygiene practices.

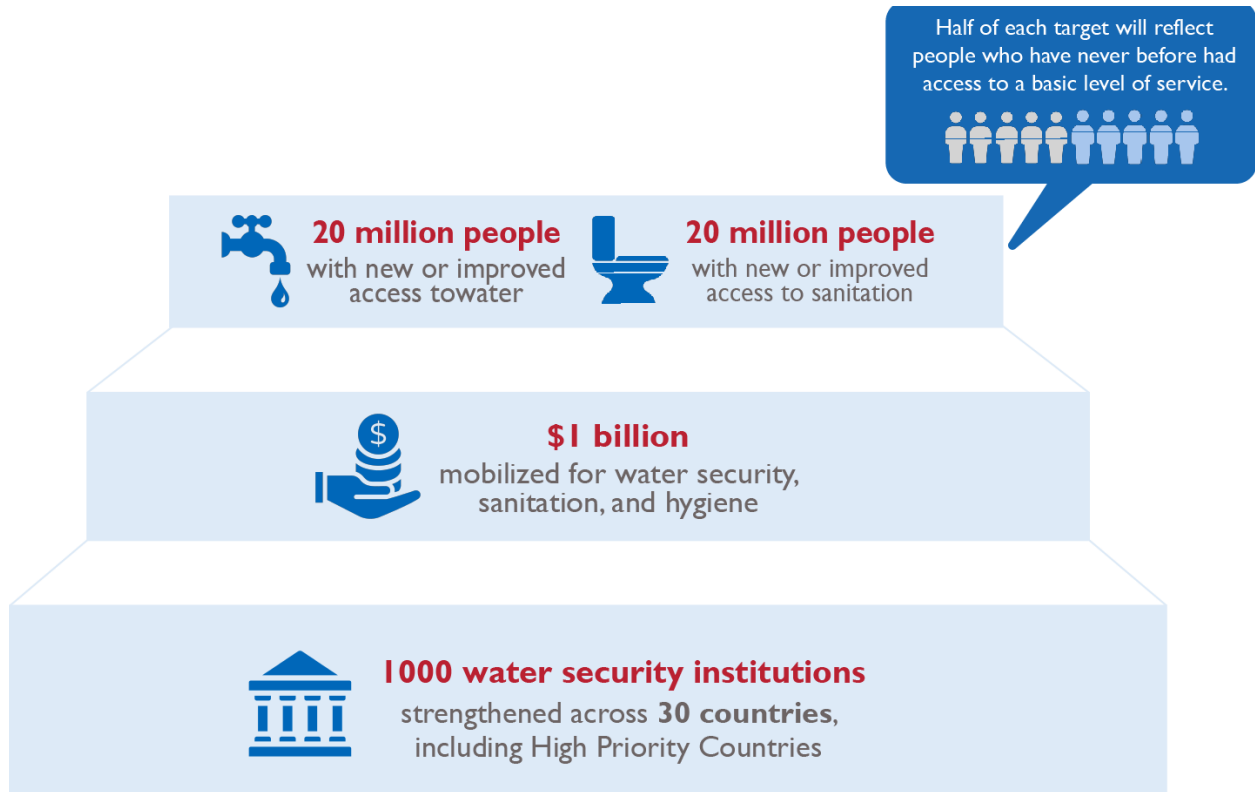


### OPERATING PRINCIPLES



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## 1 Exhibit 2: USAID targets for the Global Water strategy period (2022–2027).



2

### 3 Strategic Objective 1: Strengthened Water and Sanitation Sector

#### 4 Governance, Financing, Institutions, and Markets

5 Under Strategic Objective (SO) 1, USAID will work with its partners to drive improvements in  
6 governance, finance, and market systems that underpin progress toward universal access to  
7 water and sanitation services and broader water security. USAID views this as a foundational  
8 objective that cuts across and supports all other SOs. When countries have effective policies,  
9 country-led processes, and institutions capable of implementing them, they attract investment  
10 from both domestic and external sources, leading to a cycle of increased capacity, greater  
11 investor confidence, increased sector finance, and accelerated coverage of water and sanitation  
12 services. Through this SO, USAID also seeks to reduce corruption and advance accountability,  
13 equity, and efficiency through working with government actors at all levels, public and private  
14 institutions and civil society organizations. In doing so, USAID will align with GWS Principle 2:  
15 Focus on meeting the needs of marginalized or underserved people and communities, and  
16 those in vulnerable situations to achieve inclusive development and equitable outcomes (see  
17 also [Text Box 1](#)). USAID's Intermediate Results (IRs) under SO 1 are described below.

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### 1 **IR 1.1 Inclusive laws, policies, and regulations developed, strengthened, and** 2 **implemented**

3 More effective and inclusive laws, policies, and regulations are fundamental to transforming the  
4 sector both in terms of sustainably increasing access to water and sanitation services for all and  
5 ensuring water resources and watersheds are sustainably managed. For laws, policies and  
6 regulations to be inclusive, they need to reflect the priorities of diverse stakeholders in their  
7 language and implementation, and specifically target equitable and inclusive outcomes. The  
8 policy, legal, and regulatory environments in many countries are not currently conducive to  
9 mobilizing finance, improving the management of water resources, or expanding services,  
10 especially to underserved and marginalized communities. Even if policies are in place, many  
11 countries have limited tools (strategy, regulation, and plans) and capacity to advance reforms.

12 Under this IR, USAID will support sector governance and financing by working with local,  
13 national, and regional institutions, including traditional or customary systems, to develop and  
14 improve policies, plans, and coordination in ways that are inclusive and actionable, enable  
15 private sector participation, and promote transparency, participation, and accountability. USAID  
16 will carefully balance competing objectives when supporting the strengthening of laws, policies  
17 and regulations, such as setting user fees and rate structures that make services affordable to  
18 citizens, while ensuring long-term financial viability of public or private service providers.

19 Illustrative activities include:

- 20 ● Support host governments in the coordinated development and implementation of  
21 inclusive sector strategies, policies, standards, and institutional and regulatory  
22 frameworks to improve water and sanitation services and water resource management  
23 at the national and subnational levels.
- 24 ● Support processes such as Joint Sector Reviews and other multi-stakeholder platforms  
25 that strengthen coordination and accountability among government and local civil society  
26 actors.
- 27 ● Increase understanding and commitment to enforce water and sanitation policies,  
28 regulations, agreements, and plans at regional, national, and sub-national levels.
- 29 ● Provide technical assistance to help structure and implement economic incentives, such  
30 as targeted subsidies, to expand services more equitably.
- 31 ● Conduct tailored and on-demand assessments and action planning such as enabling  
32 environment assessments and market assessments, and use these assessments to  
33 develop decision-support tools.
- 34 ● Conduct political economy analyses, systems mapping, or other exercises to better  
35 understand power dynamics, accountability gaps, and incentives that shape behaviors  
36 and decision-making in the sector.



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### 1 **IR 1.2 Public and private financing effectively targeted and mobilized**

2 Water and sanitation is a sound investment—every dollar invested brings a four-fold return on  
3 social, economic, and development outcomes.<sup>ii</sup> Conversely, poorly managed sanitation and  
4 water and lack of hygiene, exacerbated by climate change, could lead to losses of up to seven  
5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in certain countries.<sup>iii</sup> Yet, the financing needed for  
6 delivering sustainable water management and universal access to WASH vastly exceeds  
7 current levels of investment.<sup>iv</sup> Availability of finance is inextricably linked to water and sanitation  
8 sector governance, performance and transparency. Most countries invest less than 0.5 percent  
9 of GDP in the sector, well short of the Sanitation and Water for All target of 5 percent of the  
10 national budget.<sup>v</sup> Mobilizing additional domestic resources will require better tracking and  
11 monitoring of current public investments and increased advocacy for additional domestic  
12 resources from sources such as increased tax revenues and user fee reforms. Moreover, it is  
13 estimated that only 15 percent of water and sanitation utilities in low-income countries are able  
14 to cover operations and maintenance costs with user fees, a primary source of revenue.<sup>vi</sup>  
15 Service providers become more competitive for additional funding, both private and public,  
16 when they first collect existing user fees more efficiently and comprehensively. Finally,  
17 expanding access to new and creative sources of funding for the sector, including blended  
18 financing mechanisms, revolving funds, repayable commercial finance, and climate funds, is  
19 critical to meet growing financial needs of service providers and other sector institutions.

20 Under this IR, USAID water and sanitation programs will aim to increase the effectiveness of  
21 current funding and mobilize additional public and private funds to expand and improve water  
22 and sanitation services and management of water resources, especially in a world altered by  
23 climate change and increasing water stress.

24 Illustrative activities include:

- 25 ● Support the development and implementation of local and national government sector  
26 financing plans to maximize and better target existing public funding and mobilize  
27 additional funds from domestic public and private resources and user fees.
- 28 ● Leverage digital tools and other opportunities to improve efficient collection of user fees.
- 29 ● Strengthen water and sanitation service providers' business viability and credit-  
30 worthiness to unlock access to public and commercial finance.
- 31 ● Partner closely with multilateral development banks and other development finance  
32 institutions, including national development banks, to maximize efficiency of existing  
33 sector funding and expand resources to the sector.
- 34 ● Develop, modify, and/or expand financial products and instruments to help meet the  
35 demand from service providers and other actors in the water and sanitation value chain  
36 by increasing the understanding of the water and sanitation sector by local banks, financial  
37 institutions, and investment platforms.
- 38 ● Facilitate transactions such as increasing access to loans for water and sanitation  
39 businesses and households, using catalytic capital to leverage private finance for blended

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 financing mechanisms, payment for environmental services mechanisms to support  
2 management of water resources, and access to climate finance platforms.

- 3 • Strengthen budgeting and public financing and develop partnerships with the private  
4 sector and civil society to sustainably support improved WRM.

### 5 **IR 1.3 Improved capacity and performance of regional, national, and sub-national** 6 **institutions**

7 Fostering a strong and diverse set of public and private institutions is critical to rapidly, equitably  
8 and sustainably extending and improving the quality of water and sanitation services and  
9 effectively managing water resources. These institutions can include governments, regional  
10 entities, civil society organizations, transboundary or other basin authorities, traditional or  
11 customary governance or management entities, and formal or informal water and sanitation  
12 service providers from across the water and sanitation value chain (see also SO2).

13 Under this IR, USAID will work with local communities and governments to identify and target  
14 technical assistance and other investments that foster sustained improvements in the  
15 performance of diverse sector institutions, building resilience and fostering locally driven  
16 changes that are necessary for meaningful and long-term progress on reducing water insecurity.  
17 through targeted investments in human resources and capacity-building, business and  
18 operational planning, improved management systems and technologies, clarification of roles  
19 and responsibilities within decision-making processes, integrating data and evidence into  
20 routine planning, and improving communication with and responsiveness to customers and  
21 other stakeholders.

22 Illustrative activities include:

- 23 • Support the capacity of local civil society organizations, especially those led by and for  
24 different underserved or marginalized groups and communities, to engage in planning,  
25 monitoring, and provision of services.
- 26 • Support human capacity development for professionals in government, the private  
27 sector, and civil society through training, mentoring programs, and twinning  
28 arrangements that connect institutions to transfer expertise and share best practices,  
29 and that recognize, award, and elevate outstanding performers.
- 30 • Provide technical assistance and capacity building support for improved annual budget  
31 process, contracting, and supervision with national and subnational government  
32 departments or agencies.
- 33 • Strengthen institutional capacities to integrate adaptive management principles,  
34 strategies, and technologies into planning frameworks to ensure governance is effective  
35 in the face of deep uncertainty from climate change.
- 36 • Support capacity building and diversification of the workforce of sector institutions and  
37 markets through formal training, professionalization, certification, and mentoring.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

### 1 **IR 1.4 Participatory, data-driven, and transparent decision making to advance** 2 **accountability, equity, and efficiency**

3 Improving water and sanitation services requires participation beyond formal ministries and  
4 service providers; individuals, communities and advocacy organizations need to be included to  
5 ensure decision making is transparent and accountable. Building citizen trust and reducing  
6 corruption through engagement of local civil society, water and WASH service users, and  
7 service providers is critical to legitimize planning, implementation, and review of sector  
8 initiatives.

9 USAID will support transparent and accountable decision-making by strengthening the enabling  
10 environment for and capacity of constituents and underrepresented voices to be at the decision-  
11 making table and participate safely and meaningfully. Additionally, USAID will support civil  
12 society organizations in holding governments accountable, including in locations where  
13 partnership with governments is limited due to corruption and government-sanctioned conflict.  
14 USAID will invest in the institutionalization of collection, analysis, sharing, and increased use of  
15 evidence and data to improve decision making and adaptive management, optimizing the use of  
16 existing resources to accelerate access and equity of services. This includes targeted support to  
17 governments and/or civil society to close water and sanitation data gaps that can help improve  
18 services.

19 Illustrative activities include:

- 20 ● Support standardization, collection, and public access of high-quality data about WASH  
21 services and water uses and resources such as water quality information, key  
22 performance indicators for service providers, service coverage, and WASH budgets,  
23 including support for national statistical agencies and multi-stakeholder learning  
24 platforms.
- 25 ● Promote stakeholders' participation, capacity, and leadership, especially among women  
26 and civil society to effectively advocate for enhanced services for marginalized  
27 populations, including through harnessing data and evidence.
- 28 ● Support local institutions to build their own data collection and data analysis skills so that  
29 they can close key data gaps and increase the use of community-derived data.
- 30 ● Support processes and tools for government and service providers to hear directly from  
31 and be held accountable by users, such as transparent complaint processes and forums.

32

#### **Text Box 1. Inclusive Approaches to Meeting the Needs of Underserved and Marginalized People and those in Vulnerable Situations**

USAID takes an inclusive development approach in its water security, sanitation and hygiene investments. This means considering the reasons an individual, household or community may be unserved or underserved or struggle to access sanitation and water resources. It also recognizes that some people are marginalized by virtue of their membership in specific

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

groups, identity, or for historical or other contextual reasons. These groups include, but are not limited to: (1) children in adversity, (2) women and girls, (3) persons with disabilities, (3) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people, (4) Indigenous Peoples, (5) youth and older persons, and (6) racial, ethnic or religious identity.<sup>vii</sup> USAID also takes targeted approaches to promote and ensure water security for people in vulnerable situations. Vulnerable situations can arise from climate change, state fragility, internal displacement, natural disasters, and other challenges that create barriers to water security and sanitation regardless of a person's level or type of marginalization. Each underserved or marginalized person or community, and those in vulnerable situations, may face other intersecting barriers to water security and sanitation, including but not limited to legal status, poverty, geography, education, social status, profession, and other social, economic and political factors. To improve the inclusivity and equity of water, sanitation and hygiene outcomes, USAID will partner with underserved and marginalized people and communities, and with civil society organizations led by and for them and people in vulnerable situations. This includes, for example, seeking free, prior and informed consent; supporting capacity development to accomplish locally defined goals; meaningful participation in activity and policy design, implementation, monitoring and research; honoring local and traditional knowledge and systems; and using inclusive and accessible communications tools and social and behavior change approaches.

### 1 Strategic Objective 2: Increased and More Equitable Access to Safe, 2 Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Drinking Water and Sanitation Services 3 and Adoption of Hygiene Practices

4 Under SO 2, USAID seeks to partner with local government and public and private sector  
5 service providers to expand access to safe, affordable, reliable, and climate-resilient water,  
6 sanitation and hygiene products and services across entire cities, districts, or counties, including  
7 in institutional settings like schools and healthcare facilities. USAID will emphasize working  
8 through local systems (see Principle 1) and align with work under SO 1 to improve the  
9 performance of service providers and market actors along water and sanitation value chains.  
10 USAID will also support state-of-the-art behavior change approaches that concurrently address  
11 individual, structural, and social factors to increase the adoption and sustained practice of key  
12 hygiene behaviors, including for menstrual health.

#### 13 **IR 2.1 Increased area-wide<sup>viii</sup> access to safe and climate-resilient sanitation services**

14 New evidence indicates that health, nutrition, early childhood development, and other positive  
15 downstream outcomes of better sanitation are only achieved when improvements occur across  
16 entire geographies—e.g., when most households across an entire community or neighborhood  
17 or larger area have access to improved sanitation.<sup>ix</sup> To do so, USAID will focus its work at these  
18 area-wide scales, while also aligning with local administrative units, such as governments, and  
19 market systems. USAID will also seek to support outcomes across the entire sanitation service  
20 chain and shift its programming toward more contextual, layered, and sequenced approaches

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 that are necessary to ensure coverage across the diversity of geographic, market, and  
2 population demographics that exist at these scales.

3 During extreme storms or floods, poor quality or poorly situated household latrines, sanitation  
4 infrastructure like wastewater treatment plants, or sanitation services like desludging services  
5 can all sustain severe damage or be difficult to operate effectively, cutting off access and  
6 shutting down vital services. This in turn exacerbates public health impacts at a time of crisis  
7 and increases costs of extending sustainable and safe sanitation in the long-term. USAID will  
8 thus work with key stakeholders in the sanitation sector to create policies, operational protocols,  
9 and promote investment decisions that take climate risks into account, helping to prepare  
10 service providers and regulators for extreme events and improving the resilience of new  
11 household and municipal infrastructure to withstand future climate impacts.

12 Engaging with women and girls and other marginalized groups, is an essential part of creating  
13 safe, effective, climate-resilient area-wide sanitation systems. USAID will support equitable,  
14 gender-responsive, and inclusive sanitation approaches that integrate necessary programmatic  
15 elements, including behavior change, policy strengthening, infrastructure, financing options for  
16 businesses and households, monitoring, leadership, and partnership with the private sector in  
17 order to support area-wide sanitation that protects human health and is climate resilient and  
18 sustainable.

19 Illustrative activities:

- 20 ● Support programs that seek to promote increased adoption of sanitation and hygiene  
21 products, services, and behaviors.
- 22 ● Promote achievement of safely managed sanitation that considers climate risks and  
23 includes infrastructure and services along the full sanitation service chain including fecal  
24 sludge management.
- 25 ● Conduct sanitation market assessments to understand and strengthen markets and  
26 improve the viability of sanitation businesses.
- 27 ● Support capacity building and workforce development for sanitation leadership, planning,  
28 design, construction, monitoring, and implementation of sanitation programs and  
29 improvements.
- 30 ● Engage traditional and non-traditional sanitation stakeholders (e.g., local government  
31 authorities, traditional rulers, landlords) to change attitudes and standards around the  
32 need for improved latrines in every dwelling sold or leased.

### 33 **IR 2.2 Increased access to safe, equitable, accessible, and climate-resilient drinking** 34 **water services**

35 Increasing access to safe, reliable drinking water services brings proven health and economic  
36 benefits to households, communities, and nations.<sup>x</sup> Reducing the distance between home and  
37 point of access to water has also been linked to increased use and safety of water, decreased

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 prevalence of diarrheal disease, increased nutritional status, decreased child mortality,  
2 improved mental health, and reduced bodily injury from water fetching.<sup>xi</sup> More proximate,  
3 including on-premise, access to drinking water is particularly important for gender equity in low-  
4 income households, where women and children tend to bear disproportionate responsibility for  
5 water collection.<sup>xii</sup> Effective, safe, and independent access for women, girls, and persons with  
6 disabilities is critical to minimizing risks of exploitation, abuse, and deteriorating health or  
7 hygiene.

8 USAID will work with partners to increase access to both basic and safely managed water  
9 services, decreasing the distance to point of access, improving water quality and service  
10 reliability at the point of use, and increasing access to water on premise. This includes engaging  
11 in efforts to ensure access to safely managed water in institutional settings, including healthcare  
12 facilities and schools. USAID will promote area-wide approaches by working with public and  
13 private sector partners to strengthen and/or develop service delivery models to reach more  
14 people, particularly low-income and marginalized households, with progressively higher quality  
15 and more affordable services, noting that approaches may differ between urban and rural areas.  
16 While USAID will support new construction, it will focus heavily on improved service provider  
17 operations and maintenance and asset management practices to ensure the sustainability of  
18 services. To promote sustainability and increase equity in access, USAID will also strive to  
19 increase the meaningful participation of low-income and marginalized groups in the design,  
20 implementation, and evaluation of activities (see also [Text Box 1](#)).

21 Climate change is increasing water stress in many places, making water quality and availability  
22 less predictable, while extreme weather events damage infrastructure and overwhelm water  
23 treatment systems. To address the growing climate risks to safe and sustainable drinking water  
24 services, USAID will work with partners to better address climate risks in the design, financing,  
25 and construction of infrastructure. It will also work with water service providers and their  
26 regulators to better prepare for drought and other disasters, for example through reducing  
27 system leaks and non-revenue water, and engaging more proactively in watershed  
28 management to improve water quality and availability at the point of supply.<sup>xiii</sup> Particularly in  
29 urban areas and areas that are already or soon to be water stressed, USAID will emphasize  
30 improvements in water use efficiency, raw water supply, and demand management.

31 Illustrative activities:

- 32 ● Construct new or rehabilitate and provide technical assistance in the planning, financing,  
33 and implementation of climate resilient infrastructure and services, using inclusive  
34 approaches, with emphasis on reliable operations and maintenance arrangements.
- 35 ● Support programs that ensure low income and marginalized water users gain access to  
36 at least basic drinking water services.
- 37 ● Strengthen water safety, quality, and quantity monitoring systems and increase the  
38 capacity of service providers to undertake routine water quality testing.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 • Strengthen access to basic water in institutional settings by working with government  
2 partners to integrate WASH into overall planning and monitoring processes, particularly  
3 as part of quality of care and infection prevention control efforts.
- 4 • Conduct analyses of the impacts of conflict on access to water and sanitation services  
5 for marginalized groups.

### 6 **IR 2.3 Improved performance and climate resilience of water and sanitation service** 7 **providers**

8 Water and sanitation service providers and their performance are a crucial part of water and  
9 sanitation systems and are vital to achieving universal access. Service providers can be private  
10 sector enterprises, government institutions, parastatal entities, NGOs or community-based  
11 organizations; their structure varies from informal individual water vendors to formalized utilities.

12 USAID will support improving the performance of all types of service providers with a focus on  
13 promoting principles of commercial operations. USAID will focus on strengthening operational  
14 capacity and increasing efficiency before making large investments in infrastructure. USAID will  
15 assist such service providers with networking, forming or expanding trade organizations, and  
16 collaboration across market segments. USAID sees service providers as key stakeholders and  
17 leaders in strengthening services for climate resilience, and will work with them to ensure  
18 services, and revenue collection, are resilient to shocks and stresses.

19 Illustrative activities:

- 20 • Improve business, financing, and investment planning, including revenue collection,  
21 creditworthiness, and key performance indicators and benchmarks, leveraging digital  
22 tools where appropriate and the testing and scale up of innovative models.
- 23 • Support reductions in non-revenue water and energy efficiency improvements for  
24 utilities.
- 25 • Strengthen the operational and technical capacity of service providers including the  
26 diversification of workforce and promotion of women and other marginalized populations  
27 in leadership roles.
- 28 • Support service providers to conduct vulnerability assessments and climate risk  
29 analyses, and to use the assessments in business continuity and emergency response  
30 planning.
- 31 • Support networking and trade organizations, twinning, and accountability through civil  
32 society to improve performance, including for small and informal providers.

### 33 **IR 2.4 Increased adoption of key hygiene practices**

34 While behavior change is important for all IRs within the Agency Plan, its contribution is most  
35 prominent within sanitation and hygiene. USAID will work with communities and institutions,

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 such as healthcare facilities and schools, in a locally led, context-driven manner to support a  
2 range of improved behaviors linked to adoption of key hygiene practices including, but not  
3 limited to, handwashing with soap, safe drinking water management, safe food hygiene, safe  
4 handling of animal feces, and practices to improve menstrual health and hygiene. Beyond  
5 individual hygiene practices, USAID will also work with local partners to support efforts to shift  
6 social and gender norms linked to WASH, adjust incentive structures, and work toward  
7 improving policies that foster a stronger enabling environment.

8 Illustrative activities include:

- 9 ● Research consumer and household preferences, needs, and barriers to behavior  
10 change to strengthen social and behavioral change (SBC) investments.
- 11 ● Strengthen policy, regulations, laws that enable market availability and accessibility of  
12 multiple product choices to support hygiene behaviors.
- 13 ● Design and implement evidence-based SBC interventions that address individual  
14 behavioral determinants and promote positive social and gender norms.
- 15 ● Build capacity and knowledge of community health workers, educators and members of  
16 civil society to influence individual and communal behaviors and to endorse norms-  
17 shifting interventions.

### 18 Strategic Objective 3: Improved Climate-Resilient Conservation and 19 Management of Freshwater Resources and Associated Ecosystems

20 Under SO 3, USAID will invest in watershed conservation and water resources management  
21 (WRM) to help partner countries plan for rising water stress and ensure that water is available to  
22 support vibrant communities and cities, sustainable food and energy systems, and healthy  
23 ecosystems. Working in tandem with water policy and governance under SO 1, USAID will  
24 focus its efforts on ensuring that WRM institutions have the capacity and financial resources to  
25 make decisions that are informed by data and are more resilient and inclusive. WRM is a  
26 multisectoral challenge. Connecting work under this SO to other USAID initiatives—in particular,  
27 Feed the Future under the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), biodiversity  
28 conservation efforts under the USAID Biodiversity Policy, climate change adaptation and  
29 mitigation under the USAID Climate Change Strategy and PREPARE, and other programming  
30 to build resilience, address climate risks, and/or foster sustainable management of natural  
31 resources—will be critical to help ensure the availability of water for agricultural and food  
32 security uses, economic productivity, human health, and ecosystem health. In particular,  
33 USAID’s work under this SO also aligns with and reinforces GFSS IR6, “Improved Water  
34 Resources Management.”

#### 35 **IR 3.1 Water resources more equitably allocated and efficiently used**

36 Effective WRM involves understanding and allocating available water resources across users  
37 within basins, while drawing out and promoting local solutions and planning to sustainably



## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 develop available resources and enhance watersheds. Many critical basins lack essential  
2 comprehensive water management and allocation plans, often because they span  
3 administrative boundaries, facing more complex governance challenges. In many instances, the  
4 current and future needs of water for different uses have not been characterized and the water  
5 needs of ecosystems are not accounted for. Where such plans have been developed, the water  
6 supply and quality are rarely sufficient to sustainably meet the competing needs of all users,  
7 future changes in demand and climate are often not taken into account, and implementation and  
8 enforcement of plans is challenging. Moreover, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other  
9 underserved and marginalized groups are not often sufficiently engaged or empowered in  
10 making water allocation decisions.

11 Under this IR, USAID will work to advance more sustainable use of water resources and more  
12 equitable allocation of water across users and ecosystems within a river basin or other target  
13 geography (including transboundary basins). Durable solutions require understanding water  
14 availability and water use at multiple spatial and temporal scales and participatory analysis of  
15 existing land and water tenure, including the customary and traditional rights, practices and  
16 systems of Indigenous Peoples. As equitable allocation means ensuring there is enough water  
17 to sustain ecosystems, an understanding of the water needs of ecosystems is also critical.  
18 Engagement of a broad range of stakeholders to identify challenges underpins an equitable  
19 prioritization of uses and actions to improve the quantity and quality of available resources (see  
20 also IR 3.2). Climate and land use changes pose particular challenges to sustainable and  
21 equitable management and allocation of water resources; working with stakeholders to develop  
22 management plans and choices that are more robust in the face of climate change uncertainties  
23 and taking into account drivers and consequences of land use changes is a critical priority for  
24 both water security and climate change adaptation. USAID will also work to reduce pressure on  
25 water resources by promoting sustainable agricultural water management and more efficient  
26 water use, reducing sources of pollution, and conserving critical water source ecosystems for  
27 the benefit of both humans and biodiversity. USAID will also promote cooperation and equitable  
28 resource sharing as a key principle to account for situations where there is shortage of water  
29 supply among competing users, regions, or countries.

30 Illustrative activities:

- 31 ● Convene and support multi-stakeholder water user groups for collaborative water  
32 allocation and integrated WRM plans, with specific focus on including women,  
33 Indigenous Peoples, and other underserved and marginalized groups and people in  
34 vulnerable situations.
- 35 ● Strengthen capacities of water user associations, regulatory agencies, and laboratories  
36 to routinely collect and utilize data and information on water use, hydrometeorological  
37 conditions, and water quality.
- 38 ● Facilitate the development and implementation of stakeholder-driven water allocation  
39 and integrated WRM plans.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1       • Develop tools, technologies, and information to inform water resources management,  
2       such as remote sensing, hydrological monitoring and modeling, and climate information  
3       services.
- 4       • Promote practices and innovations that improve water use efficiency, conservation, and  
5       water reuse.

### 6   **IR 3.2 Enhanced water quality, quantity, and reliability through watershed conservation,** 7   **restoration, and green infrastructure**

8   Activities that improve water storage and moderate water flow or availability over months or  
9   even years greatly enhance the success and resilience of water management strategies. The  
10   same can be said for activities that improve water quality so that more is available for human  
11   use, human health, and to support ecosystems. Gray infrastructure improvements  
12   (conventionally engineered systems), such as water treatment plants, pipelines, canals, water  
13   tanks, and concrete water impoundments, have a role to play. However, nature-based solutions,  
14   such as improving land management practices or uses, preventing or reversing wetland, forest,  
15   or other ecosystem degradation, and investing in green infrastructure within critical watersheds,  
16   can provide lasting benefits and are often more cost-effective than gray infrastructure. These  
17   benefits can extend to other development objectives, such as biodiversity conservation,  
18   improved public health, and greenhouse gas mitigation. Traditional knowledge and Indigenous  
19   Peoples' practices can be resources for innovative and nature-based solutions for watershed  
20   and water resources management and USAID will seek in particular to build partnerships, where  
21   relevant, with Indigenous Peoples, and to support their leadership in planning and implementing  
22   such solutions.

23   Under this IR, USAID will work within watersheds to promote the design and implementation of  
24   interventions that enhance water storage and groundwater recharge, improve water quality and  
25   reduce the cost of water treatment, restore and maintain river flow and enhance resilience to  
26   floods and droughts, and increase water-related ecosystem services. Interventions will be  
27   chosen as part of watershed planning processes where there is collaboration across sectors  
28   and stakeholders to consider multiple potential goals and the costs-benefits of different types of  
29   interventions.

30   Illustrative activities:

- 31       • Support analysis and stakeholder engagement necessary to identify priority watersheds  
32       and actions for investment.
- 33       • Strengthen natural systems to maintain ecosystem goods and services, such as soil  
34       conservation, reforestation, wetland restoration and conservation, and promote other  
35       green infrastructure such as the construction of infiltration ponds, sand dams, and  
36       vegetative buffer strips.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1       ● Improve the collection of water abstraction and user fees and establish water funds and  
2       markets that link downstream water users with upstream landowners to help pay for  
3       planning and conservation and restoration efforts.
- 4       ● Promote practices and innovations that improve water use efficiency, conservation, and  
5       water reuse, including by building on indigenous knowledge and practices.

### 6   **IR 3.3 Water resources resilient to climate-related shocks and stresses**

7   Water is at the center of the climate crisis.<sup>xiv</sup> Climate change is increasing water stress in many  
8   places, making water availability less predictable, with more extreme rainfall and flooding in  
9   some areas and more protracted, severe, or frequent drought in others. Events such as  
10   droughts and floods can have drastic effects on communities, especially communities that are  
11   more vulnerable to such events because of poverty or other factors that contribute to  
12   marginalization. Climate and weather extremes result in the loss of life, destruction of  
13   infrastructure, food insecurity, the spread of disease, and the exacerbation and spread of  
14   conflicts.

15   Under this IR and in conjunction with work under SOs 1 and 4 and IRs 3.1 and 3.2, USAID will  
16   work to increase preparedness and reduce overall vulnerability to flooding, drought, and other  
17   water-related events such as hurricanes and extreme monsoons. USAID will work with  
18   communities and institutions to manage future uncertainty and climate-related risks to the long-  
19   term quality and availability of water resources, and to enhance capacity to analyze and use  
20   climate and weather data in decision making.

21   Illustrative activities:

- 22       ● Provide technical assistance to national, regional, and local governments to proactively  
23       incorporate climate risk into water security policies, including through flood and drought  
24       risk assessments and maps.
- 25       ● Support the management of uncertainty and variability of future water resources by  
26       pursuing local solutions and embracing a participatory approach to identify water  
27       security hazards.
- 28       ● Support the capacity development of local leaders in effective communications and  
29       engagement to empower their communities, especially women, Indigenous Peoples, and  
30       people and groups that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts to  
31       participate in policy reform to support climate-related risk management for water  
32       resources.

### 33   **Strategic Objective 4: Anticipate and Reduce Conflict and Fragility Related** 34   **to Water**

35   As the world faces more frequent and intense conflicts, extreme weather events, and climate-  
36   related migration, USAID will work in fragile contexts to reduce water-related drivers of and

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 vulnerabilities due to conflict and fragility through a multifaceted approach that focuses on  
2 systems preparedness, emergency response when needed, conflict mitigation, and coherence  
3 across approaches. Given that conflict and disasters often reveal and reinforce systemic  
4 inequalities,<sup>xv</sup> USAID will maintain a “do no harm” posture and will focus on those marginalized  
5 populations that are at greatest risk. This includes women, girls, and gender minorities who  
6 experience disproportionate rates of gender-based violence in conflict and disaster settings,<sup>xvi</sup>  
7 displaced populations, who face compounding water-related vulnerabilities,<sup>xvii</sup> and other groups  
8 who face discrimination due to underlying power structures that drive systemic disparities that  
9 perpetuate the cycle of water-related fragility, conflict, and vulnerability.<sup>xviii</sup>

### 10 **IR 4.1 Strengthened capacity to predict, prepare for, and adapt to shocks impacting water** 11 **and sanitation systems in fragile settings**

12 Disasters that commonly affect water and sanitation systems, including but not limited to  
13 conflict, extreme storms, earthquakes, and disease outbreaks, have the destructive power to  
14 undermine health systems, economies, and political stability. In the past 20 years, over half of  
15 all natural disasters were floods (44 percent), droughts (6 percent), and other water-related  
16 events. Flooding can also accelerate the spread of waterborne diseases, such as cholera, which  
17 spreads primarily in areas with inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene access.<sup>xix</sup> These  
18 disasters led to 1.6 million human deaths, the vast majority (82 percent) of which were in low-  
19 and lower-middle income countries. Water and conflict have a reciprocal relationship; drought  
20 can be a predictor of sociopolitical unrest, while conflict can lead to damage to water  
21 infrastructure and reductions in access and quality.<sup>xx</sup>

22 And while disasters can and do happen everywhere, focusing on reducing disaster risk in places  
23 that face recurrent shocks makes economic sense. Estimates suggest that every dollar spent on  
24 social safety-net or resilience building in areas of recurrent drought will result in three dollars of  
25 benefit in terms of avoided asset losses and reduced humanitarian spending.<sup>xxi</sup> Therefore,  
26 USAID will address chronic water vulnerabilities and reduce the overall impact of recurrent  
27 water shocks and stresses in fragile contexts through a focus on enhancing systems that reduce  
28 disaster risk and build local, national, and regional response capacities to confront disasters.

29 Illustrative activities include:

- 30 ● Provide technical assistance to national and regional governments and traditional and  
31 customary governance institutions to establish and codify emergency response  
32 strategies appropriate for disasters, water-related disease outbreaks, and armed conflict.
- 33 ● Work to improve national and regional meteorological services for seasonal climate  
34 forecasting as part of improving preparedness, especially for drought.
- 35 ● Empower community members and civil society, including organizations led by and for  
36 underserved and marginalized groups, to participate in disaster preparedness planning  
37 and to assess the capacity of hygiene practices and water and sanitation infrastructure  
38 to mitigate known hazards.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1       • Invest in systems and planning to support the distribution and storage of commodities  
2       procurement and stockpiling for disaster preparedness.
- 3       • Work with other donors to proactively mobilize funding to ensure water and sanitation  
4       service delivery to displaced populations.
- 5       • Engage national governments, financial institutions and insurance providers, and micro  
6       entrepreneurs to develop weather-indexed insurance in areas prone to droughts and  
7       floods.

### 8   **IR 4.2 Addressed humanitarian water and sanitation needs**

9   Emergency water and sanitation needs are already acute. One hundred-twenty million people  
10   were in need of WASH-related humanitarian assistance in 2021, while a 75 percent funding gap  
11   existed and around 40 percent of those humanitarian water and sanitation needs went unmet.<sup>xxii</sup>  
12   In 2022, basic emergency water and sanitation needs are projected to increase in 56 of 58  
13   countries identified as “fragile contexts” in the [OECD States of Fragility Framework](#) (2018),<sup>xxiii</sup>  
14   while rising conflict is set to exacerbate the scope of emergency water and sanitation needs  
15   globally.<sup>xxiv</sup> Disasters can induce damage to water and sanitation infrastructure and water  
16   resources that create public health risks, erode household assets, and wipe out livelihoods for  
17   affected populations; WASH interventions in particular are essential for curbing the impacts of  
18   infectious disease outbreaks and mitigating disproportionate impacts of crisis, such as gender-  
19   based violence, on marginalized groups. In addition, climate change will lead to more frequent  
20   and severe disasters, perpetuate a vicious cycle of degenerative erosion of productive assets,  
21   degrade WASH conditions and water resources, and increase vulnerability to shocks, stresses,  
22   and conflict. Meanwhile, WASH remains one of the most chronically underfunded sectors within  
23   humanitarian assistance.<sup>xxv</sup>

24   USAID will address global humanitarian water and sanitation needs through water supply,  
25   sanitation, hygiene promotion, environmental health, menstrual health and hygiene, and WASH  
26   non-food items (NFIs) interventions to reduce morbidity and mortality resulting from shocks or  
27   displacement.<sup>xxvi</sup> These interventions focus on meeting the immediate needs of populations,  
28   particularly in consultation with vulnerable and displaced groups, and in so doing, improve  
29   public health and the dignity of beneficiaries.<sup>xxvii</sup>

30   Illustrative activities:

- 31       • Repair critical water and sanitation systems that have been damaged by disaster or  
32       conflict, considering groundwater resource sustainability and multiple water uses  
33       (including livestock and agriculture).
- 34       • Distribute and train beneficiaries on effective use of WASH non-food items (e.g., water  
35       treatment, menstrual hygiene supplies, hygiene kits), supported with key hygiene  
36       practices.
- 37       • Support staffing for critical humanitarian WASH coordination roles.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 • Incorporate protection and gender-based violence prevention and safeguarding  
2 principles into humanitarian water and sanitation programs.

### 3 **IR 4.3 Strengthened cooperation and reduced conflict over water**

4 Some level of conflict over water is inevitable due to competing uses, needs, tenure claims and  
5 priorities, but good governance and management of the resource base can prevent these  
6 conflicts from escalating.<sup>xxviii</sup> Conflict and cooperation over water co-exist and are interrelated; it  
7 is rare that a given interaction over water can be categorized purely as a “conflict” or as  
8 “cooperation.”<sup>xxix</sup> With the mounting impacts of climate change and growing demand for water  
9 resources, water will continue to factor into political, social, and economic tensions. Even when  
10 it is not the direct cause of conflict, water resource disputes can exacerbate existing fragility and  
11 disputes between social groups, regions, or nation-states.<sup>xxx</sup> At local levels, there have been  
12 many cases where cooperation over water has been maintained despite periodic, minor  
13 conflicts, such as between herders and farmers.<sup>xxxi</sup> Cooperation has the potential to create  
14 better outcomes through water activities that use systems approaches, such as ecosystem  
15 services programs that incentivize responsible use of shared waters by municipalities for social,  
16 economic, and ecological purposes.<sup>xxxii</sup>

17 The relationships between water, conflict, and cooperation are often indirect and complex, and  
18 always mediated by local socioeconomic systems. For that reason, USAID will use systematic  
19 tools that address potential water-related conflicts, and/or how water programming could  
20 inadvertently trigger conflict, as part of the program design process. USAID will leverage a suite  
21 of tools, including the Conflict Assessment Framework (to be updated and renamed the  
22 Violence and Conflict Assessment Framework in 2022), the Water and Conflict Toolkit (to be  
23 updated in 2022)<sup>xxxiii</sup> and the Land and Conflict Toolkit (also under revision) to integrate conflict  
24 analysis and do-no-harm principles into programs, while balancing the need to address the  
25 resource dynamics of conflict as well as the broader systems of which those conflicts are a part  
26 (e.g., governance, economic, cultural).

27 Illustrative activities include:

- 28 • Conduct conflict assessments or analyses as part of program design to identify linkages  
29 between water, conflict, and proposed USAID activities.
- 30 • Support the collection and use of data for decision making across stakeholder groups.
- 31 • Bring together and build the capacity of stakeholders, including relevant regional  
32 organizations, to establish or improve governance processes in order to prevent the  
33 escalation of a water conflict.
- 34 • Promote cross learning processes for transboundary water cooperation among different  
35 stakeholders.

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

### 1 **IR 4.4 Strengthened coherence across humanitarian, development, and peace** 2 **approaches to water and sanitation programming**

3 Fragile contexts demand a nuanced approach to sector programming, requiring simultaneous,  
4 coordinated efforts across humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) assistance.<sup>xxxiv</sup> This  
5 coordination can take the form of complementary, yet separate programs in the same  
6 geographic area, or fully integrated programs that blend different HDP approaches within a  
7 single activity. Complementary approaches can be no- or low-cost and easy to incorporate into  
8 current programs or future projects. For example, increasing the engagement and role of the  
9 private sector or using market-based approaches, while ensuring the needs of people in  
10 vulnerable situations are met can be a part of any actor’s toolbox. Integrated approaches  
11 require more conscious program development efforts and engagement with host country  
12 governments, including through joint analysis and design. At their core, both approaches require  
13 that development actors focus on strengthening systems at all levels to facilitate emergency  
14 response when needed, and that humanitarian actors create an enabling environment for long-  
15 term development when addressing shocks.<sup>xxxv</sup>

16 Therefore, USAID will align water and sanitation technical approaches across humanitarian,  
17 peacebuilding, and development programming in fragile contexts through coordinated planning,  
18 analysis, and measurement.

19 Illustrative activities include:

- 20 ● Joint planning and analysis across relevant stakeholders to identify entry points and  
21 inform initial designs, annual work planning, and “collaborating, learning and adapting”  
22 activities, including through stakeholder mapping, stakeholder analysis, scenario  
23 planning, gender and protection analyses, and conflict analysis.
- 24 ● Developing locally owned, shared metrics for success in water and sanitation  
25 programming across humanitarian, development, and peace actors operating within  
26 overlapping geographic zones.
- 27 ● Monitoring support at the onset and throughout the duration of shocks, including the  
28 implementation of baseline and endline surveys to measure outcomes.
- 29 ● Facilitating joint work planning and/or pause and reflect exercises to enhance  
30 coordination and collaboration across actors responding to evolving needs.

### 31 **USAID Approaches and Commitments to Mainstreaming Global Water** 32 **Strategy Operational Principles**

33 The GWS operational principles are core values that guide USAID water and sanitation  
34 investments across all SOs and the USAID Program Cycle. Under this Plan, USAID will employ  
35 specific means to track alignment with and progress against each principle (see also Program  
36 Cycle section).<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

### 1 **Principle 1: Work through and strengthen global, national, and local systems**

2 Achieving a water-secure world requires working at multiple levels, engaging and strengthening  
3 global, national and community systems. Global systems, which include UN agencies,  
4 international financial institutions, national governments, and international and local civil society  
5 (including the media), are interconnected with regional, national and local systems. Adopting a  
6 systems approach requires intentional efforts to understand layered contexts and the  
7 stakeholders that impact water and sanitation outcomes in specific settings. For example,  
8 engagement of civil society—a key actor in any system—can improve the inclusiveness of  
9 policies, the responsiveness of water and sanitation service providers, the allocation of water  
10 resources, and the links between humanitarian and development processes. Engagement of the  
11 local private sector can generate new products, market approaches, and sources of funding that  
12 influence the overall system. Working with traditional or customary structures and building on  
13 Indigenous knowledge and practices enhances resilience and increases the inclusiveness of  
14 investments. Understanding systems, including relevant stakeholders, power dynamics, and  
15 influencers, is essential to lifting barriers to global water security, sanitation and hygiene. To  
16 ensure uptake of Principle 1, USAID water and sanitation programs are all expected to  
17 contribute to SO 1, and are strongly encouraged to employ systems analysis tools, such as  
18 those described in the Agency’s [WASH Governance technical brief](#), to identify specific problems  
19 and ways to address them across the Program Cycle. Investing in capacity development of key  
20 stakeholders at the local and national levels to support local actors to design and lead  
21 sustainable solutions and to drive increased sector financing is also critical. This includes civil  
22 society engagement in USAID activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation and  
23 alignment with the [New Partnerships Initiative](#), where appropriate.

### 24 **Principle 2: Focus on meeting the needs of marginalized or underserved people and** 25 **communities, and those in vulnerable situations**

26 Achieving universal access to water and sanitation means leaving no one behind, yet many  
27 people in both stable and fragile contexts face barriers to accessing services, and may lack  
28 agency in water resources management based on factors including, but not limited to, sexual  
29 orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, race, ethnicity, religion,  
30 class, disability, legal status, geography, and/or age (see also Text Box 1). Other factors, such  
31 as harmful gender norms and menstruation-related stigma and taboos, apply across contexts  
32 and augment vulnerability. To ensure that USAID water and sanitation programs are reaching  
33 underserved and marginalized people and communities and those in vulnerable situations,  
34 USAID partnerships and investments will focus on progressive realization of services for these  
35 groups, including through deliberate targeting and tailoring of investments and systematic  
36 methods for engaging underserved and marginalized people and those in vulnerable situations  
37 in activities and research. This starts with understanding and responding to specific contexts,  
38 experiences, traditional knowledge, and barriers to equity and inclusive outcomes, and includes  
39 incorporating the findings of mandatory gender analyses into activity design, implementation  
40 and monitoring, and increasing the use of social and inclusive development analytical tools  
41 across the Program Cycle. Increased reporting of indicator disaggregates in water and



## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 sanitation programs, including disaggregation by sex and, where possible, gender, and by other  
2 factors reflecting marginalization groups (e.g., youth, persons with disabilities or Indigenous  
3 Peoples), is a best practice to better guide the Agency’s impact and continually improve the  
4 design and targeting of investments. Improved reporting on Performance Progress Reporting  
5 Key Issues such as Menstrual Health and Hygiene and Gender will incentivize and scale up the  
6 scope and impact of cross-cutting inclusive development activities within water and sanitation  
7 programs. Intentional efforts such as these to more fully integrate inclusive development across  
8 water and sanitation programming are key to the Agency realizing its 2022–2027 target of  
9 ensuring half of all people directly reached with water and sanitation services are receiving first-  
10 time access.

### 11 **Principle 3: Leverage research, learning, and innovation**

12 Research, learning, and innovation are core to USAID’s ability to ensure Agency water and  
13 sanitation investments are impactful, climate-resilient, equitable, and sustainable and its  
14 commitment to locally led learning and adaptation. Principle 3 hinges on (1) maximizing  
15 Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) practices in water and sanitation programs; (2)  
16 rigorously evaluating Agency water and sanitation programs to draw lessons for future  
17 implementation, including through the lens of inclusive development; (3) supporting data  
18 generation, use, and sharing by partner countries and local actors; and (4) investing in research  
19 that answers key questions about implementation and global trends for decision makers,  
20 including existing research mechanisms across the Agency, and those elevated in the Agency’s  
21 [Water for the World Research Agenda](#), and leveraging.

### 22 **Principle 4: Incorporate resilience to shocks and stressors in planning and operations**

23 Shocks and stressors—ranging from floods, droughts, pandemics and conflict to job loss or  
24 catastrophic family illness—have strong links to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Stable and  
25 affordable access to water and sanitation services, hygiene products, and water resources can  
26 provide protection to households, communities, and economies facing unpredictable challenges.  
27 Where water or sanitation services lag and water resources are insecure, shocks and stressors  
28 may be exacerbated or their impacts prolonged. To support household and community  
29 resilience, USAID will incorporate adaptive approaches for responding to shocks and stressors  
30 into water and sanitation activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation as  
31 appropriate. Increasing ambition to analyze and incorporate programming design elements to  
32 respond to climate risks identified through Climate Risk Management screening will also be  
33 important to realizing Principle 4 across the USAID water and sanitation portfolio, as will  
34 capturing results from such activities using standard climate change adaptation indicators, as  
35 appropriate.

### 36 **Implementing Across the USAID Program Cycle**

37 USAID strives to ensure that water and sanitation programming is strategically focused for  
38 maximum impact and sustainability. The sections below provide high level guidance and

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 guidelines for developing water and sanitation programming through the USAID Program Cycle,  
2 [including strategic planning, project and activity design and implementation, developing activity](#)  
3 budgets and resourcing, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). While the Strategy  
4 guides investment across development and emergency programming, there can be exceptions  
5 to the guidance in this section when programming outside the development assistance  
6 framework.

### 7 **Designation of High Priority and Strategic Priority Countries and Regions**

#### 8 **High Priority Countries**

9 Planning and prioritizing development assistance under this Plan is guided by the [Senator Paul](#)  
10 [Simon Water for the World Act](#) of 2014 (WftW Act). While the achievement of this Plan depends  
11 on contributions beyond programming funded through the WftW Act, including agriculture,  
12 biodiversity, climate change, and humanitarian assistance, among others, the WftW Act requires  
13 the President, by October 1 every year, to annually designate “no fewer than 10 countries as  
14 high priority countries (HPCs) to be the primary recipients of United States Government  
15 assistance” authorized under the Act. Selection of HPCs and regions is based on needs and  
16 opportunity criteria laid out in Section f(1) of the WftW Act, and in Annex B of the overall Global  
17 Water Strategy. Although HPC designations are officially made annually, USAID intends to  
18 retain a consistent set of HPCs for the life of this Strategy. A current list of countries designated  
19 as high priority under the WftW Act can be found on the [Global Waters](#) website.

20 Per the WftW Act, High Priority Countries will be the primary recipients of USG official  
21 development assistance programmed under this Strategy. HPCs are also required to meet  
22 additional requirements for strategic planning, staffing, programming, and monitoring ([Text Box](#)  
23 [2](#)).

#### **Text Box 2. What does it mean to be a WftW High Priority Country?**

HPCs are prioritized as the primary recipients for development assistance authorized under the WftW Act. Given the significant investment and focus on water and sanitation needs and opportunities in HPCs, the designation comes with an expectation of greater reach and impact of HPC country programming. To support this ambition, USAID/Washington will prioritize HPC missions for technical support, capacity development, and access to centrally funded field support activities. To ensure rapid and effective implementation of this Strategy and the WftW Act, HPCs are also subject to a number of expectations and requirements:

- Field staffing: The WftW Act requires HPC missions to identify a lead subject matter expert that can help deliver impactful programming.
- Country Plans and Strategic Planning: The WftW Act requires HPCs to develop Plans that include budgets and are evidence-based and results-oriented in order to deliver on Agency water security objectives. HPC missions are strongly encouraged to link

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

this Plan with other high-level planning processes and documents, such as Regional and Country Development Cooperation Strategies (R/CDCS).

- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Research:** In order to demonstrate the impact in HPCs, HPC missions must report annually on standard water and sanitation indicators, including at least one standard indicator to capture results under SO 1, as well as disaggregates noted below. HPCs are also encouraged to contribute to sector learning as relevant locally via investment in closing knowledge gaps as laid out in the Water for the World Research Agenda. With the support of Washington, HPC will be required to conduct monitoring and assessments to enable USAID to understand how well they are delivering on the approaches in the strategy, including technical pivots, strategy principles, and best practices.

Details and additional recommended implementation practices for HPCs and other Operating Units (OUs) programming under this Strategy are included throughout the Program Cycle and Roles and Responsibilities sections of this Plan.

### 1 **Strategic Priority Countries**

2 Strategic Priority Countries (SPCs) are places in which USAID anticipates substantial and long-  
3 term investment in water and sanitation due to a combination of strategic considerations and  
4 development needs. SPCs are not eligible for designation as HPCs because they do not have  
5 high or medium-high needs as defined by the Needs Index, but are critical countries for USAID  
6 engagement on water and sanitation for reasons including national security and other  
7 geopolitical considerations, and water scarcity and stress. SPCs are also designated annually,  
8 given high levels of sustained investment, and expected to deliver impactful programming  
9 aligned with this Strategy and Plan. As such, best practices and specific requirements for SPCs  
10 around strategic planning, programming, and monitoring, are outlined in the sections below. A  
11 current list of countries designated as SPCs can also be found on the [Global Waters](#) website.

### 12 **Strategic Planning**

#### 13 **Reflecting the Global Water Strategy in Regional and Country Development Cooperation** 14 **Strategies**

15 Strategic planning for most bilateral and regional USAID missions is reflected in Country  
16 Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) and R/CDCS. The CDCS provides a guide for  
17 the subsequent design of projects and/or activities to operationalize specific results so this is an  
18 important opportunity to ensure water and sanitation related challenges and objectives are  
19 carefully considered. Per ADS 201.3.2.6, Missions must align their R/CDCSs to Agency and  
20 Interagency Strategies/Policies. HPCs and SPCs that develop new or make significant revisions  
21 to existing R/CDCSs during this five-year plan period are strongly encouraged to reflect water  
22 and sanitation priorities in their R/CDCSs, such as through establishing an Intermediate Result

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 (IR) or Sub-IR linking directly to the Strategy and USAID Agency Plan Results Framework.  
2 USAID/Washington will engage HPC and SPC missions during Phase One of the R/CDCS  
3 development process and work collaboratively to align R/CDCSs and Strategy priorities and  
4 objectives. Other missions programming WftW-authorized development assistance are  
5 encouraged to consider this approach.

### 6 **Developing Individualized Plans for High Priority Countries**

7 The WftW Act specifies that USAID develop individualized plans for designated HPCs as part of  
8 an appendix to the Agency’s Strategy requirements. The aim of HPC Plans is to ensure that the  
9 country-level strategies for implementation advance and align with the revised Strategy,  
10 Agency-specific plans and the CDCS. HPC Plans are to be “costed, evidence-based and  
11 results-oriented.”

### 12 **Program and Activity Design and Implementation**

#### 13 **Design objectives**

14 USAID projects and activities funded under the WftW Act must be designed so that they  
15 contribute to one or more of the SOs of the Strategy and the associated IRs of this Plan, while  
16 meaningfully reflecting Strategy Principles. The design process is a unique opportunity to  
17 understand local contexts and systems, and leverage the best available data and evidence in  
18 order to:

19 **Maximize impact:** Effective design ensures that the greatest number of targeted people  
20 and systems receive the greatest possible benefit, delivering the most transformative  
21 impact possible using the available resources. It is expected, especially for HPCs and  
22 SPCs, that programming is designed to be transformative in the sector.

23 **Ensure equity:** Marginalized populations are often the hardest to reach, but investing  
24 the resources needed to do so is a core principle of the Strategy and the WftW Act  
25 (Principle 2). As such, all water and sanitation program and activity designs should  
26 include analysis to better understand and explicitly reduce inequity in water and  
27 sanitation access and benefits. This includes inequity between wealthier and poorer  
28 populations that typically have access to lower quality and more expensive services, and  
29 inequities due to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex  
30 characteristics, level of physical and mental ability, indigenous status, age, religion,  
31 ethnicity, location, and other factors (see [Text Box 1](#)). Water and sanitation project and  
32 activity designs should also ensure that such marginalized populations have input into  
33 the design process itself, and participate meaningfully and safely in activity  
34 implementation and monitoring, and in research.

35 **Increase the likelihood of durable results and localization:** Ensuring that the impact  
36 achieved can be sustained and expanded in the future requires taking a systems  
37 approach that among other things includes increasing local ownership and investing in

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 local capacities. To ensure alignment with the core Strategy operating principle to work  
2 through and strengthen global, national, and local systems, water and sanitation  
3 programs and activities should all at a minimum contribute to SO 1 and work to  
4 strengthen governance, financing, institutions, and markets and the relationships  
5 between them. Local knowledge and expertise should be emphasized where possible to  
6 better tailor programming to specific social, cultural, political, economic, and  
7 environmental contexts and support empowerment and sustainability.

8 Meeting these design elements can be facilitated by analysis to identify the best geographic  
9 and/or thematic fit for programming, as well as identifying the approaches that will best suit the  
10 target context.

### 11 **Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL) and Research**

12 Continuous MEL and research help USAID tell our story and provides opportunities for  
13 improved CLA. Five key components capture this Plan’s approach to MEL and to research.

14 **Standardized Reporting:** Reporting on high-level indicators and their disaggregates is  
15 essential for capturing progress toward the goal and strategic objectives of this Strategy  
16 and form a core part of the water and sanitation MEL framework. Standard indicators are  
17 measures that USAID and the Department of State use to collect performance data that  
18 can be aggregated globally to help justify requests for funding, understand operational  
19 challenges, assess progress, and support external reporting. Standard indicators related  
20 to water, sanitation and hygiene are found under HL.8 in the Department of State Office  
21 of Foreign Assistance’s Standardized Program Structure and Definitions (SPSD). USAID  
22 has updated the suite of standard indicators to capture results under each SO, and  
23 USAID’s water and sanitation [Indicator handbook](#) further describes how to apply and  
24 measure against water and sanitation standard and custom indicators, while a Climate  
25 Change and Water Security, Sanitation and Hygiene Indicator Reference Cheat Sheet  
26 has been prepared to ensure better reporting on related climate standard indicators in  
27 support of the USAID Climate Strategy.

28 Every USAID activity utilizing Water directive funding must report on at least one  
29 standard water and sanitation indicator. To advance the governance and finance  
30 priorities laid out in this Plan in addition to Strategy Principle 1, High Priority and  
31 Strategic Priority OUs must at a minimum report on standard water and sanitation  
32 indicators HL.8.3-3 or HL.8.4-1 each year, in addition to other standard indicators as  
33 relevant. Other OUs are encouraged to do the same, as appropriate. Where appropriate,  
34 activities should report on standard Global Climate Change indicators to demonstrate  
35 progress in transforming the emissions profile and climate vulnerability of water and  
36 sanitation systems, in alignment with the USAID Climate Strategy and PREPARE  
37 Initiative. To better align with Strategy operating principles on equity and resilience, and  
38 to ensure progress toward meeting the targets in this Plan, HPC and SPC OUs must  
39 also report on existing key standard indicator disaggregates, including, as appropriate:

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1           • Sex and, where available and appropriate, gender
- 2           • Marginalized Groups (e.g., as defined in Text Box 1 and by ADS 201)
- 3           • Number of Institutions Strengthened for the First Time
- 4           • Funds Mobilized for Climate Resilient Water and Sanitation Services

### **Assessment and Monitoring of Programming Pivots, Principles, and Outcomes:**

5 USAID will monitor and assess the Agency’s progress towards programming and results  
6 that reflect the priorities and associated pivots in the GWS and this Plan, including  
7 progress towards integrating principles. HPCs must contribute to these assessments  
8 through supplementary monitoring of programming.  
9

10 **Evaluation:** Evaluations of certain USAID water and sanitation programs and activities  
11 may meet the evaluation requirements under ADS 201.3.6.5. When OUs undertake  
12 evaluations of water and sanitation programs or activities, they are strongly encouraged  
13 to incorporate evaluation of the programming priorities, principles, and desired outcomes  
14 laid out in the Plan, including the efficacy of governance and finance, inclusive  
15 development, climate resilient, and locally led development approaches as they relate to  
16 water and sanitation.

17 **Coordinated Research and Learning:** To elevate and coordinate research across  
18 WftW activities and programs, USAID has developed a [Water for the World Research](#)  
19 [Agenda](#). Through existing and future research activities, USAID/Washington is  
20 committed to investing significant resources over the Strategy period to advance  
21 knowledge against the gaps identified therein and to maximize the impact of the  
22 Agency’s investments through the improved evidence base for programming. In  
23 alignment with the Strategy principle on research and innovation (Principle 3), OUs are  
24 encouraged in their activity and programming learning agendas to contribute to at least  
25 one of the research gaps identified in the Research Agenda. HPCs and SPCs in  
26 particular should work to make meaningful contributions to these broader research  
27 objectives.

28 **Data and Information Sharing:** Data and information produced by each activity is an  
29 essential resource for future learning and programming. As per ADS 579, data should be  
30 shared through the Data Development Library as well as with other appropriate  
31 government agencies and global data efforts (as appropriate). As per AIDAR 752.7005  
32 all program learning documents are also required to be posted to the Development  
33 Experience Clearinghouse.

### **Additional Resources and Processes to Support Strategic Programs and Activities**

34 **Technical Guidance:** A more expansive synthesis of the latest global evidence and  
35 recommended programming approaches associated with SOs, IRs, and Principles and  
36 different programming contexts can be found in USAID’s Water and Sanitation [Technical](#)  
37

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 [Brief Series](#). USAID/Washington will periodically update this technical series with new  
2 topic areas and additional evidence or other guidance, as appropriate.

3 **Capacity Building and Training:** USAID/Washington will implement a capacity building  
4 strategy for USAID field staff with a focus on professionalizing the sector backstop within  
5 the Agency and offering opportunities for professional development to maximize the  
6 Agency's internal capacity to achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategy and our  
7 Agency Specific Plan. Through four interrelated work streams, USAID's capacity building  
8 efforts will seek to promote, improve, and create opportunities for water and sanitation  
9 field staff to apply best practices, systems, processes, and tools to design, manage,  
10 learn from and adapt water and sanitation programs to increase the effectiveness of  
11 programming globally. Offerings include a global biannual workshop to facilitate learning  
12 and evidence exchange, a focus on enhancements to internal systems and processes  
13 (including regularizing Foreign Service National fellowship opportunities, creating career  
14 ladders and pursuing a pilot foreign service backstop), improving internal knowledge  
15 management tools and providing networking support, and finally, a Continuous Learning  
16 Series that utilizes several different learning approaches, as well as an associated  
17 competency-based training plan to create a personalized experience for learners  
18 throughout that is grounded in the key knowledge, skills and abilities required to be an  
19 effective leader in water security, sanitation, and hygiene.

20 **Water and Sanitation Portfolio Reviews:** USAID/Washington will support Mission  
21 water and sanitation programs who choose to conduct regular water and sanitation  
22 portfolio reviews to discuss current and planned investments, project and activity  
23 evaluations, mission water directive pipeline, results, challenges, pivots, and tradeoffs  
24 that elevate water and sanitation priorities and achieve Strategy SOs. HPC and SPC  
25 Missions are strongly encouraged to undertake such a portfolio review annually, either  
26 incorporated into existing processes such as the Mission's preset periodic overall  
27 Portfolio Review or as a dedicated exercise. These reviews should be conducted in  
28 participation with the Mission Director, water and sanitation technical staff and other  
29 relevant offices, and the Global Water Coordinator (GWC) or their designee and should  
30 be led by Mission water and sanitation leads (see Roles and Responsibilities).

### 31 **Programmatic Budgeting and Resources**

32 The WftW Act authorizes USAID to engage in drinking water and sanitation service provision,  
33 hygiene, and WRM in developing countries. Since 2008, annual appropriations acts have  
34 provided legal authority for USAID to spend funds on water and sanitation service provision and  
35 hygiene. Recent annual appropriations also include subdirectives; since FY 2008, USAID has  
36 received a subdirective on water, sanitation, and hygiene in sub-Saharan Africa; beginning in  
37 FY 2015, USAID has received a subdirective on safe latrines. Sector spending must conform to  
38 annual appropriations language, and to Agency-specific policy including as laid out in this  
39 Strategy and Plan. Technical recommendations on allocation levels and subsequent use of  
40 approved levels of water and sanitation directive (e.g., earmark) will be updated by the

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

1 USAID/Washington Water Technical Working group and Water Leadership Council (see Roles  
2 and Responsibilities) and serve as a guide and input to the formal budget process.

3 Where outcomes benefit myriad development sectors (e.g., reducing student absenteeism or  
4 enhancing government effectiveness) or where gains across other sectors benefit water and  
5 sanitation (e.g., enhancing public financial management or agricultural water use efficiency),  
6 blended or integrated funding approaches should be considered. In particular, achieving SO 3  
7 and SO 4 are a shared responsibility across numerous appropriations, initiatives, and earmarks.  
8 For instance, where watershed conservation or other WRM benefits are not principally linked to  
9 the provision of drinking water, USAID will use agriculture, biodiversity, or other funds as  
10 appropriate. Similarly, where water investments mitigate escalating conflict between  
11 communities, USAID should blend democracy or other funds, as appropriate.

### 12 Roles and Responsibilities

13 Clear organizational roles and responsibilities are necessary to ensure effective implementation  
14 of the Agency Plan's SOs and in line with its principles. The roughly 80 USAID personnel  
15 stationed at headquarters and across the world, as well as entities listed below have specific  
16 roles related to water, sanitation, and hygiene programming.

#### 17 **Global Water Coordinator**

18 The WftW Act statutorily requires that the USAID Administrator serve concurrently as, or  
19 appoints at the Deputy Assistant Administrator level or higher, a Global Water Coordinator to  
20 oversee USAID water, sanitation, and hygiene programs, co-lead the implementation and  
21 revision of USAID's portion of the GWS with the Department of State, and to expand USAID's  
22 program capacity in HPCs. In addition, the GWC represents the Agency on issues related to  
23 water security, sanitation and hygiene to Congress and the National Security Council and at  
24 external conferences, and other events ([Public Law 113-289](#)).

#### 25 **Water and Sanitation Technical Working Group**

26 The USAID Water and Sanitation Technical Working Group (WS-TWG) is a Washington-based  
27 water and sanitation coordination and leadership platform composed of technical staff  
28 representing regional and pillar bureaus and Missions with water and sanitation programming.  
29 This platform provides a multi-sector structure for collaboration across the extended  
30 Washington-based water team in areas such as technical and implementation coordination,  
31 strategy development, balancing of equities, and policy recommendations. Ad-hoc subworking  
32 groups may be formed to address specific initiatives, discuss topical challenges, or advise OUs  
33 per the request of Mission Water and Sanitation Leads and USAID/Washington Mission Water  
34 and Sanitation Support points of contact (PoCs). The WS-TWG also provides technical  
35 guidance and recommendations to the WLC. The Director of the USAID/Washington Center for  
36 WSSH serves as the chair of this group and the liaison between the WS-TWG and WLC.<sup>xxxvii</sup>



## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

### 1 **Mission Water and Sanitation Leads**

2 Mission water and sanitation leads are Mission-based subject matter experts who coordinate  
3 and lead the Mission water and sanitation portfolio and coordinate with USAID/Washington  
4 Water and Sanitation Mission Support PoCs, U.S. Embassy Team at the host country, host  
5 country officials, and other donors active in advancing water security in the host country. HPC  
6 Missions are required by the WftW Act to designate Water and Sanitation Leads, but all  
7 Missions with significant water and sanitation portfolios are strongly encouraged to establish this  
8 role. Especially at HPC and SPC missions, Water and Sanitation Leads should be full-time staff  
9 with strong water and sanitation sector technical backgrounds. Leads should be at either Office  
10 Director or Project Management Specialist level serving within U.S. Direct Hire (USDH), U.S.  
11 Personal Service Contractor (USPSC), Third Country National (TCN), or Cooperating Country  
12 National (CCN) capacity, and should be responsible for managing the water security portfolio at  
13 their Missions, including guiding the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of water  
14 and sanitation activities, and ensuring alignment with the Strategy and this Plan.  
15 USAID/Washington will support the professional development of water and sanitation leads and  
16 other technical staff through its capacity building strategy (see above).

### 17 **Water Leadership Council**

18 The USAID WLC is an intra-agency coordination platform with representation from all pillar and  
19 regional bureaus at the Deputy Assistant Administrator level. Fundamentally, the WLC elevates  
20 the visibility and importance of water and sanitation programming in the Agency particularly  
21 among leadership within USAID's Missions. The WLC provides overall leadership and oversight  
22 to respond to agency institutional and administrative challenges and opportunities affecting  
23 programming. The WLC is chaired by the GWC—positioned within the Bureau of Resilience and  
24 Food Security—and deputy chaired by a representative from the Bureau of Global Health. The  
25 WLC is composed of representation across both Pillar and Regional Bureaus engaged in  
26 providing resources and technical oversight of water security activities. The key functions of the  
27 WLC are to support and coordinate (1) recommendations on budget allocations to the Office of  
28 Budget and Resource Management, (2) technical leadership, (3) technical policy guidance, and  
29 (4) programmatic oversight of water and sanitation activities and investments within the Agency.  
30 These specific tasks stem from [ADS Guidance on Leadership Councils](#).

### 31 **Policy Coherence**

32 The GWS and USAID Plan are aligned and linked to the following policies.

33 [United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#)

34 [U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption](#)

35 [National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality](#)

36 [U.S. Global Food Security Strategy](#) (2022–2026)

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 [U.S. Government Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy](#) (2019–
- 2 2023)
- 3 [USAID’s Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance](#) (2013)
- 4 [USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy](#) (2014–2025)
- 5 [USAID Digital Strategy](#) (2020–2024); [USAID Economic Growth Policy](#)
- 6 [USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy](#)
- 7 [USAID Sustainable Service Delivery in an Increasingly Urbanized World Policy](#) (2013)
- 8 [USAID Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis Policy](#) (2012)
- 9 [USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy](#) (2020)
- 10 [USAID Biodiversity Policy](#) (2014)
- 11 [USAID Vision for Health Systems Strengthening](#) (2030); [USAID LGBT Vision for Action](#); [USAID](#)
- 12 [Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (2020); [USAID Youth in Development](#)
- 13 [Policy](#) (2022)
- 14 [USAID Disability Policy](#) (1997); [USAID Policy on Standards for Accessibility for the Disabled in](#)
- 15 [USAID-Financed Construction](#) and the [USAID Local Capacity Development Policy](#) (2014).

1 Global Water Strategy Glossary

- 2 1. **Basic drinking water:** Drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time  
3 is not more than 30 minutes for a round-trip, including queuing time. Improved sources  
4 include those that have the potential to deliver safe water by nature of their design and  
5 construction, and include: piped water, boreholes or tubewells, protected dug wells,  
6 protected springs, rainwater, and packaged or delivered water. Note that basic drinking  
7 water for healthcare facilities is defined as water from an improved source that is  
8 available on-premises. *Source:* [JMP](#)
- 9 2. **Basic sanitation:** Use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households,  
10 but where excreta is not safely managed. *Source:* [JMP](#)
- 11 3. **Ecosystem-based adaptation:** A nature-based method for climate change adaptation  
12 that can reduce the vulnerability of societies and economies to climate stressors. This  
13 includes using nature-based methods to address aspects of water insecurity through  
14 strengthening natural systems to maintain the goods and services that ecosystems  
15 provide for human development. *Source:* [Global EbA Fund](#)
- 16 4. **Ecosystem services:** The short- and long-term benefits people obtain from  
17 ecosystems. They include: 1) provisioning goods and services, or the production of basic  
18 goods such as food, water, fish, fuels, timber, and fiber; 2) regulating services, such as  
19 flood protection, purification of air and water, waste absorption, disease control, and  
20 weather impact related regulation; 3) cultural services that provide spiritual, aesthetic,  
21 and recreational benefits; and 4) supporting services necessary for the production of all  
22 other ecosystem services, such as soil formation, production of oxygen, crop pollination,  
23 carbon sequestration, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling. [USAID Biodiversity Policy](#)
- 24 5. **Equity:** The consistent and systematic, fair, and just treatment of all individuals,  
25 including individuals who belong to marginalized and underrepresented groups that have  
26 been denied such treatment. Equity addresses the specific and proportionate needs of  
27 certain persons or groups to attain fair and just treatment and outcomes, as opposed to  
28 equality, which when used to describe a process, emphasizes the same or equal  
29 treatment for all persons or groups regardless of specific circumstances or needs.  
30 Equality as a goal refers to the equal enjoyment of resources, opportunities, and rights.  
31 [USAID Climate Strategy 2022-2030](#)
- 32 6. **Fecal sludge management:** The system for collecting, transporting, and treating fecal  
33 sludge from onsite sanitation such as pit latrines and septic tanks. Fecal sludge is made  
34 up of human excreta, water, and solid waste that is disposed of in onsite toilets and  
35 sanitation systems. Fecal sludge management is required for safely managed sanitation  
36 service where a centralized wastewater transport and treatment system is lacking.  
37 *Source:* [Environment & Public Health Organization](#)

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 7. **Gray infrastructure:** Engineered structures built with conventional methods, such as  
2 conventional steel and concrete drainage and water treatment systems (i.e., pipes,  
3 pumps, ditches, storm drains, dams, and detention ponds engineered by people to  
4 manage stormwater and drinking water). Conventional treatment systems include  
5 energy-intensive water treatment systems and processes such as membranes and  
6 reverse osmosis. *Source:* [Duke Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions](#)
- 7 8. **Green infrastructure:** Any engineered structure that uses vegetation, soils, and natural  
8 processes to manage water and create healthier built environments for people and the  
9 natural resources that sustain them. Green infrastructure can range in scale from small-  
10 scale technologies such as rain gardens and green roofs to regional planning strategies  
11 targeting conservation or restoration of natural landscapes and watersheds. Green  
12 infrastructure may be interconnected with existing and planned gray infrastructure to  
13 create sustainable infrastructure that can enhance community resilience to disasters and  
14 climate change. *Source:* [EPA](#)
- 15 9. **Groundwater:** Water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and  
16 rock. It is stored in and moves slowly through geologic formations of soil, sand, and  
17 rocks called aquifers. It is a preferred source of drinking water as it is often isolated from  
18 sources of contamination at the surface. *Source:* [USGS](#)
- 19 10. **Improved drinking water:** Improved drinking water sources are those that have the  
20 potential to deliver safe water by nature of their design and construction, and include  
21 piped water, boreholes or tubewells, protected dug wells, protected springs, rainwater,  
22 and packaged or delivered water. *Source:* [JMP](#)
- 23 11. **Improved sanitation facilities:** Improved sanitation facilities hygienically separate  
24 excreta from human contact and include: flush/pour flush to piped sewer system, septic  
25 tanks, or pit latrines; ventilated improved pit latrines, composting toilets, or pit latrines  
26 with slabs. *Source:* [WHO](#)
- 27 12. **Institutions:** A government, non-government, or parastatal organization with equities or  
28 responsibilities in the water and/or sanitation sectors. These institutions may be formal,  
29 informal, or customary and include government, civil society, the private sector, and  
30 service providers. *Source:* [UNEP](#)
- 31 13. **Integrated water resources management (IWRM):** A process for improving water  
32 resources management that has been incorporated as a goal under SDG 6 (Safe Water  
33 and Sanitation for All). IWRM explicitly recognizes the connection among water, land,  
34 and people, and actively engages stakeholders to weigh trade-offs and identify the most  
35 important water management investments, taking into account the various users and  
36 uses of water as well as the environment. The Global Water Partnership defines IWRM  
37 as “the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related  
38 resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.” IWRM is  
2 an important tool and approach for improving WRM as envisioned under DR 4. *Source:*  
3 [Global Water Partnership](#)
- 4 14. **Limited sanitation:** Households have access to a facility that is considered improved,  
5 but that is shared with other households. *Source:* [JMP](#)
- 6 15. **Limited water service:** Households have access to a basic water source, but with  
7 collection time greater than 30 minutes round-trip. *Source:* [JMP](#)
- 8 16. **Local systems:** The interconnected sets of actors—governments, civil society, the  
9 private sector, universities, individual citizens and others—that jointly produce a  
10 particular development outcome. The “local” in a local system refers to actors in a  
11 partner country. As these actors jointly produce an outcome, they are “local” to it. As  
12 outcomes may occur at many levels, local systems can be national, provincial or  
13 community-wide in scope. *Source:* [USAID Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting](#)  
14 [Sustained Development Report](#)
- 15 17. **Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH):** Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is the  
16 ability of women, girls, and transgender and gender non-binary individuals who  
17 menstruate (“menstruators” or “individuals who menstruate”) to manage their menstrual  
18 cycles in a safe, dignified, healthy, and supported manner throughout their lives. MHH  
19 encompasses Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), which is the ability to experience  
20 menses safely and sanitarily and requires access to clean supplies for collecting  
21 menstrual blood, soap and water, and safe, private, and convenient facilities for  
22 changing, laundering, or disposal of menstrual management materials; and knowledge  
23 of how to manage the menstrual cycle with dignity. Sustainable MHH approaches at the  
24 systems level include MHM programs; health care; water and sanitation services,  
25 including environmentally sound management of menstrual hygiene waste; access to  
26 accurate body-positive sexual and reproductive health information; social and behavior  
27 change to encourage positive social and gender norms and confront stigma; and  
28 advocacy for and development of improved MHH policy, inclusive of all people who  
29 menstruate. *Source:* [USAID standard definition](#)
- 30 18. **Nature-based solutions:** Actions to protect, manage, and restore ecosystems that  
31 address societal challenges effectively and adaptively are called nature-based solutions  
32 when broadly referring to goals like climate adaptation and mitigation or water and food  
33 security. *Source:* [UNEP](#)
- 34 19. **Open defecation:** The disposal of human feces in fields, forests, bushes, open bodies  
35 of water, beaches, and other open spaces or with solid waste. *Source:* [JMP](#)

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 20. **Public sanitation facilities:** Facilities that are available to the general public,  
2 sometimes for a fee. Source: [USAID Water and Development Strategy Implementation](#)  
3 [Brief on Sanitation](#)
- 4 21. **Resilience:** The ability of people, households, communities, systems, and countries to  
5 reduce, mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that  
6 reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. Source: [USAID Building](#)  
7 [Resilience to Recurrent Crisis Report](#)
- 8 22. **Safe drinking water:** Also known as potable water, safe drinking water is considered  
9 acceptable for drinking or to use in food preparation. Source: [JMP](#)
- 10 23. **Safely managed drinking water:** Drinking water from an improved water source that is  
11 located on premises, available when needed, and free from fecal and priority chemical  
12 contamination. Source: [WHO/UNICEF JMP Progress on Household Drinking Water,](#)  
13 [Sanitation, and Hygiene 2000-2020](#)
- 14 24. **Safely managed sanitation:** The use of improved facilities that are not shared with  
15 other households and where excreta are safely disposed in situ or transported and  
16 treated off-site. Source: [JMP](#)
- 17 25. **Surface water:** Water that comes from rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, and reservoirs.  
18 Surface water is also the lowest rung on the JMP drinking water service ladder and is  
19 defined as: *drinking water directly from a river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, or*  
20 *irrigation channel*. Drinking water from such sources poses the greatest risks to health  
21 because of the high risk of contamination. Source: [JMP](#)
- 22 26. **Systems:** The group of interdependent, interconnected, and interrelated actors and  
23 factors, both formal and informal, that comprise a complex social problem. No one  
24 person or organization has the ability to influence the entire system, but by working  
25 together, the group can move towards systems change. Source: [Collective Impact](#)  
26 [Forum](#)
- 27 27. **Underserved:** All the individuals, households, or population groups who do not have  
28 access to basic services or better.
- 29 28. **Unimproved drinking water:** Drinking water that comes from an unprotected dug well  
30 or unprotected spring. Such sources are difficult to protect from contamination. Source:  
31 [JMP](#)
- 32 29. **Unimproved sanitation:** The use of pit latrines without a slab or platform, hanging  
33 latrines, or bucket latrines. Such facilities enable fixed-point defecation, but do not  
34 protect from contact with feces, limiting health benefits. Source: [JMP](#)

## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

- 1 30. **Water quality:** Refers to the chemical, physical, biological, and radiological  
2 characteristics of water. It is a measure of the condition of water relative to the  
3 requirements of one or more biotic species and or human need or purpose. It is most  
4 frequently used by reference to a set of standards against which compliance, generally  
5 achieved through treatment of the water, can be assessed. *Source:* [USGS](#)
- 6 31. **Water scarcity:** Lack of adequate quantities of water for human and environmental  
7 uses. While many definitions of water scarcity exist, it is generally considered to be a  
8 physical characteristic of the environment and is often quantified in terms of the total  
9 water resources available to the population in a given region or country. *Source:* [UN](#)  
10 [Water](#)
- 11 32. **Water security:** The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to  
12 adequate quantities of and acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human  
13 well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-  
14 borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate  
15 of peace and political stability. Having “water security” implies access to safe drinking  
16 water and sanitation services as well as water for agriculture, energy, and other  
17 economic activities. *Source:* [NSC Water Security Action Plan](#)
- 18 33. **Water stress:** The ability, or lack thereof, to meet human and ecological demands for  
19 water. Compared to scarcity, water stress is a more inclusive and broader concept. It  
20 considers several physical aspects related to water resources, including water scarcity,  
21 but also water quality, environmental flows, and the accessibility of water. *Source:* [UN](#)  
22 [Water Report on Progress on Level of Water Stress 2021](#) (pg. 3)

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## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

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<sup>i</sup> Increasing support to extending first-time access to basic services aligns with USAID's priority under this Plan to focus on ensuring economically or otherwise marginalized people are not left behind. However, extending sustainable basic services to those who have never had it before is not equivalent to comprehensively advancing equity and inclusive approaches in water and sanitation programming. In other words, while the commitment to focus on reaching those who have not had access to basic water and sanitation contributes to USAID's commitment to equity and inclusive development, it does not represent the entirety of our approach (see also Text Box 1 and Principle 2).

<sup>ii</sup> Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) "[Water and Sanitation: How to make public investments work: A Handbook for Finance Managers](#)," (2020)

<sup>iii</sup> The World Bank. "[High and Dry: Climate Change, Water and the Economy](#)," *World Bank*, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO. (2016)

<sup>iv</sup> Strong, C., Kuzma, S., Vionnet, S., and Reig, P (2020). "Achieving Abundance: Understanding the Cost of a Sustainable Water Future". World Resources Institute (2020). Note that sustainable water management refers to SDG 6: to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

<sup>v</sup> Sanitation and Water for All (2020). *Water and Sanitation: How to Make Public Investment Work: A Handbook for Finance Ministers*. New York.

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<sup>vii</sup> USAID. [Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations: Additional Help for ADS 201](#). July 2018.

<sup>viii</sup> Area-wide refers to the population within an entire geographical area, typically aligned with governmental administrative boundaries, such as a district, province, or city.

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## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

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## USAID PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT—PREDECISIONAL

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> Where needed, USAID will update internal results reporting tools such as key issue requirements and indicator definitions, and/or provide additional technical guidance to support the broad and meaningful uptake of these principles. These are referenced in the Program Cycle section of this Plan.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> [Terms of Reference for the Water and Development Plan Implementation Working Group, 2019](#)