

# sustainable sanitation alliance

## Contribution of Sustainable Sanitation to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

SuSanA Vision Document 2017

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### Introduction

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) was formed in 2007 with the aim of promoting and advocating sustainability in sanitation in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The alliance is a loose network of organisations and individuals which has steadily grown in significance to become an important knowledge management platform and community of practice. It currently has a member base of around 8,000 people and more than 300 partner organisations, ranging from local and international NGOs, research institutions, private and public sector actors to multilateral organisations.

In 2008, SuSanA published a “vision document” [1] describing the alliance’s objectives and identifying five sustainability criteria for sanitation systems related to: (1) health and hygiene, (2) environment and natural resources, (3) technology and operation, (4) financial and economic issues, and (5) socio-cultural and institutional aspects.

SuSanA initially adopted a lobbying role to highlight the importance of sustainability issues in sanitation, particularly in the context of the MDGs, and brought together sector professionals. An important benefit of the alliance has been that it enables members to actively engage in one of the 13 current working groups, which address a broad spectrum of sustainability issues in sanitation. Over the last 10 years, SuSanA has made a significant contribution to the development of the WASH sector, with actors in the sector now focussing increasingly on the various ways of sustaining sanitation services. SuSanA also provides an important knowledge exchange platform for the sector, which is increasingly used by its partners and the WASH community to contribute to the discourse around sustainable sanitation and to promote scaling-up and innovation.

Whilst globally significant achievements were made for many of the MDGs, progress was uneven between the MDGs, as well as across regions and countries. The MDG target for sanitation was missed by a wide margin [2], and this highlights the urgency for increased action in the sanitation sector. The lack of knowledge and of capacity at all levels is one of the many reasons for this failure, with its concomitant huge health and economic consequences.

Consequently, 2.5 billion people worldwide still remain without access to improved sanitation (with 1 billion of them practicing open defecation). Furthermore, a huge proportion of faecal sludge from on-site sanitation systems and wastewater from urban areas is discharged into the environment or unsafely reused without any treatment.

At the UN Summit in New York in September 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to succeed the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

*The purpose of this document is to explain how SuSanA plans to respond to the change from the MDGs to the SDGs and contribute to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.*

### From the MDGs to the SDGs – continuing challenges and new opportunities for SuSanA

The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions remains at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the 2030 Agenda goes further than the previous development agenda [3] [4]. There are important differences between the MDGs and the SDGs in general and also in particular with regard to sanitation. These are:

- All three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – are included in the 2030 Agenda;
- The SDGs are universally applicable to all countries, not just to developing countries;
- The SDGs have been set up as a more integrated system with interlinked targets, both within and across goals; and
- Compared to the eight MDGs, the 17 SDGs are more comprehensive and complex, and the 169 SDG targets are more ambitious. Whereas the MDG targets for 2015 were set to go “half way”, the SDGs are designed to finish the job. In the case of the sanitation target, this means, “to achieve access to adequate sanitation for all”. Meeting this goal will require a stronger focus on the poorest of the poor and on the people who are the most difficult, to reach to ensure that nobody is left behind. These efforts are further supported by the explicit recognition of the human right to water and sanitation passed by the UN General Assembly in 2010.

### What does this mean for SuSanA?

- The sustainability criteria defined and promoted by SuSanA since 2007 and the orientation of SuSanA’s work have been very much in line with the underlying philosophy of the new 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.



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- (2) In the more ambitious spirit of the SDGs, SuSanA will continue to highlight the need for a systems' approach, focusing on the full service delivery chain and all system dimensions to achieve the long-term functioning of sanitation systems and services. This also implies clear emphasis on continuous monitoring mechanisms to ensure sanitation services that last.
- (3) The profile of sanitation has risen steadily during the MDG period (2000-2015) and communities, local authorities, governments and donor organisations now recognise the crucial role of sanitation for sustainable development. Therefore, SuSanA will play more of a facilitating role in the future and less of a lobbying role.
- (4) SuSanA will respond to the call to "leave no one behind" by particularly focusing its efforts on the hardest to reach and most vulnerable of people.
- (5) Whilst the activities of SuSanA will remain concentrated on the low- and low-to-middle income countries, recent developments of sanitation systems in higher income countries will be used to showcase alternatives to conventional wastewater management approaches.
- (6) The many linkages between sanitation and targets across all SDGs offer new opportunities for SuSanA to reach out to and cooperate with other sectors. How Sustainable Sanitation contributes to the targets of SDG 6 is outlined in Fig. 1 and the main sanitation interlinkages across the other SDGs are summarised in Fig. 2. These interlinkages and opportunities for multi-sector approaches are described in more detail in a separate document that can be found on SuSanA's website [6] and also in documents recently published by UN Water [7] and SEI [8].

- (7) The growing global humanitarian WASH needs, stemming from the large number of refugees, the increasingly more urban, longer-term camps, and the ever more common protracted crisis scenarios, require improved cooperation between humanitarian and development actors. Emergency interventions need to take into account sustainability issues right from the start. SuSanA recognises its responsibility to actively contribute towards meeting these needs and will work to raise the profile of sanitation within the humanitarian aid system, to highlight sustainability issues and to provide advice on sustainable sanitation solutions.
- (8) In the 2030 Agenda, the responsibility for monitoring remains primarily at the country-level. There is, therefore, an increasing need for technical assistance in developing methodologies, in designing monitoring structures compatible with existing technical and institutional capacities, and in implementing monitoring processes. SuSanA will further its work to meet these needs.

## Sanitation interlinkages across the SDGs

Recognising the interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs is of crucial importance to ensuring that the goals of Agenda 2030 are successfully met. The close links between sanitation and the many targets across all of the SDGs highlight the pivotal role that sanitation plays in the accomplishment of the SDGs and offers new opportunities for SuSanA to reach out to and collaborate with other sectors (multi-sector approaches to WASH ). The majority of the interlinkages between the SDGs are mutually reinforcing, but there may be also aspects of potential conflicts that have to be managed.

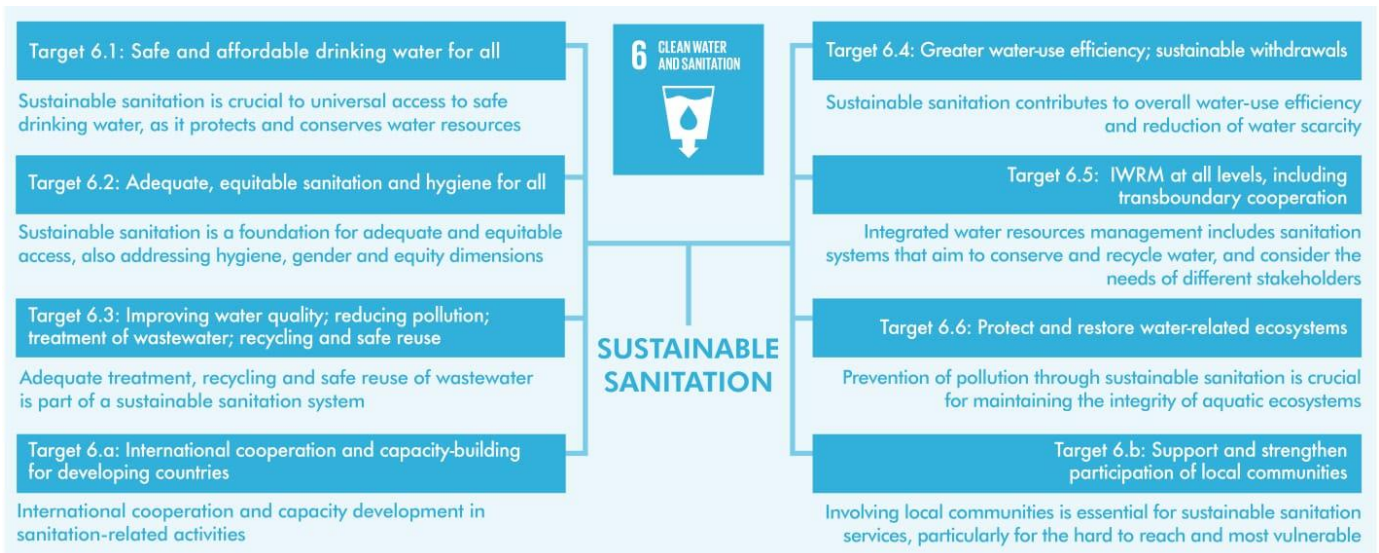
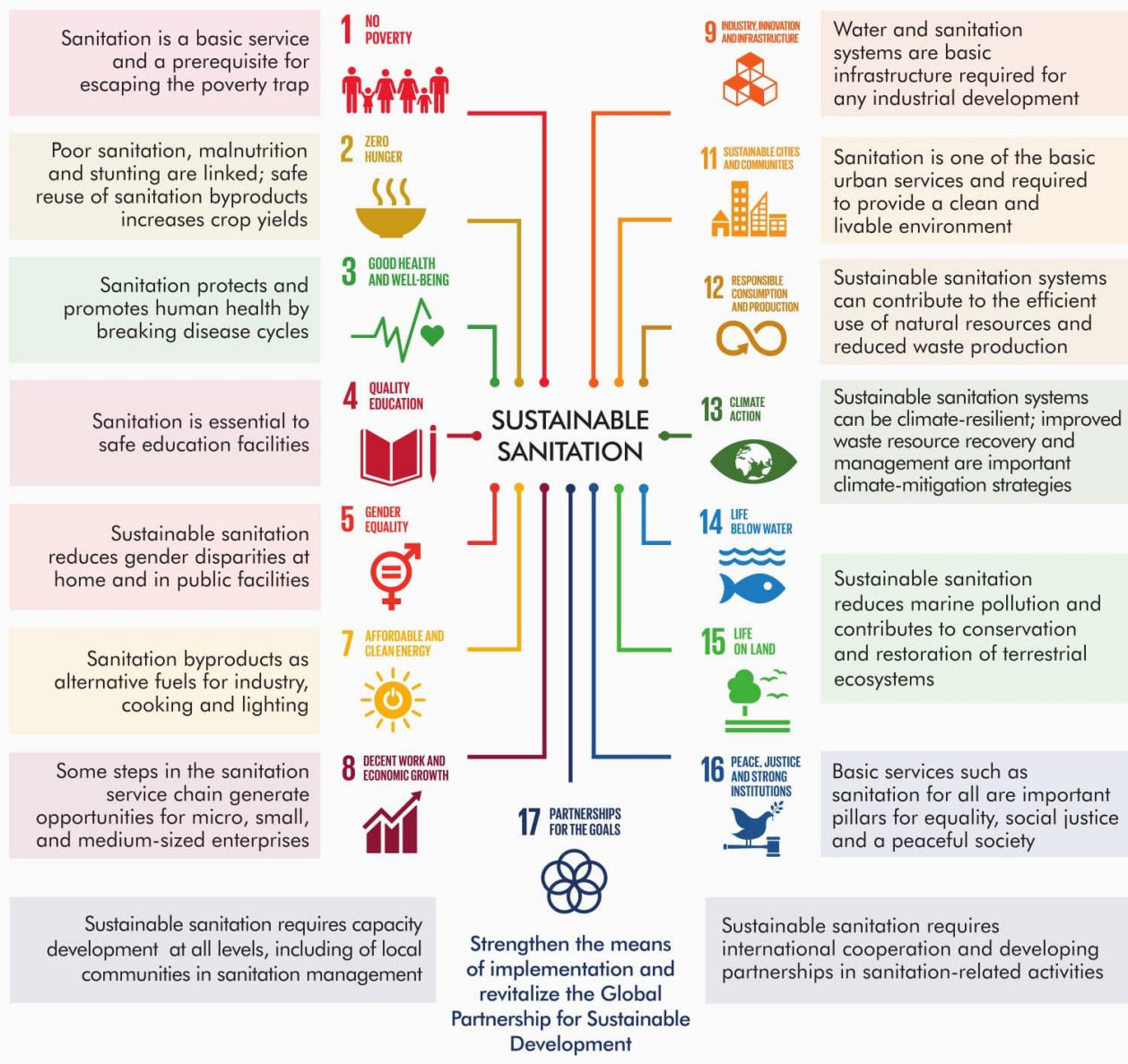


Figure 1: Sustainable sanitation interlinkages with the targets of SDG 6





**Figure 2: Sustainable sanitation interlinkages across the other SDGs**

## Goal and objectives of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA)

The overall goal of SuSanA is to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by promoting sanitation systems based on principles of sustainability. The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance welcomes and greatly appreciates the SDGs as they highlight the important role sanitation has in sustainable development and help push sanitation further up the political agenda. The focus of the work of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance in the context of the 2030 Agenda will be to facilitate the implementation of sustainable sanitation systems in water and sanitation at all levels considering the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.

The term “Sanitation” is used differently by different people and organisations and in different circumstances. In the SDGs, there is no explicit definition of sanitation, but there is a

semantic separation between sanitation (Target 6.2) and wastewater management (Target 6.3). SuSanA promotes the following operational definitions of sanitation in the context of the 2030 Agenda:

- (1) Sanitation is the act or process of making sanitary; and the promotion of hygiene and prevention of disease by maintenance of sanitary conditions [Webster Definition] <sup>[9]</sup>
- (2) A sanitation system protects and promotes human health by providing a clean environment and breaking the cycle of disease. It encompasses the institutions regulating the system, the organisations and management, the users, the entire technical infrastructure, as well as all services required for the collection, transport, treatment and management of end products of human excreta, wastewater, solid waste and storm water.
- (3) To be a sustainable sanitation system it must not only protect and promote human health by providing a clean





environment and breaking the cycle of disease, but also be economically viable, socially acceptable, and technically and institutionally appropriate, while protecting the environment and the natural resource base.

The **General objectives of SuSanA**, as formulated in the vision document of 2008, remain essentially valid. They are:

- to facilitate and promote sustainable approaches to sanitation services around the globe;
- to highlight the importance of sustainable sanitation systems and services for achieving many of the targets across the SDGs;
- to actively reach out to other sectors, enable both intra- and cross-sectoral dialogue/collaboration and encourage multi-sector approaches; and
- to convene a neutral platform of key-stakeholders to build consensus.

The **specific objectives of SuSanA** are:

- to collect and compile information which will assist decision makers (including civil society actors) to assess different sanitation services, systems and technologies with regard to the range of sustainability criteria, and promote informed decision making;
- to facilitate the planning and implementation of sustainable sanitation systems and services by developing and promoting appropriate tools and capacity development activities;
- to demonstrate how in particular reuse-oriented sanitation systems, producing, e.g. biogas, irrigation water, or fertilizer, can contribute to accomplishing all the SDGs beyond sanitation;
- to identify and describe the mechanisms for scaling-up the implementation of more sustainable sanitation systems, including providing information dealing with the appropriate financing instruments for sanitation provision for all;

- to develop global and regional visions of how sustainable approaches can contribute to reach the SDG sanitation targets;
- to provide orientation and guidance with regard to target 6.2 on setting national priorities and translating global into national targets, and to provide orientation and guidance with regard to target 6.3 on defining indicators related to recycling and safe reuse and setting national targets;

## How to achieve the objectives?

SuSanA will continue to operate through its thematic working groups, the regional chapters and the SuSanA Platform (including the discussion forum, webinars, library, project database, SuSanA's wiki pages and Wikipedia), as well as face-to-face meetings. SuSanA will, thereby, continue to serve as a knowledge management and exchange platform for its partners, members, major donors and implementing actors. The organisational structure, the thematic orientation of the working groups, and the existing fact sheets which were developed by the thematic working groups during the MDG period will be reviewed and adapted, particularly with regard to meeting the challenge of "leaving no one behind" and grasping the new opportunities to reach out to, influence and cooperate with other sectors.

## The "Sustainable Sanitation Alliance" invites others to join in

SuSanA is not an organisation, but is an open network of organisations working along the same lines and active in the promotion of sustainable sanitation. International, regional and local organisations are invited to join the network, contribute ideas, and to become active members in the thematic working groups.

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**SuSanA website:** [www.susana.org](http://www.susana.org)

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