

# The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's 2017-2021 Safe Water Strategy

## Executive Summary

For more than 25 years, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has been committed to improving access to safe drinking water in low-resource settings of Sub-Saharan Africa, Mexico and India. Our investments in the water sector have been guided by global ambitions, beginning first with the call to eradicate guinea worm followed by the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) drinking water target. The adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) gives the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector a new global ambition to strive for – pushing for bigger and better services. The Foundation has embraced this bold challenge with the design and release of its 2017-2021 grantmaking strategy.

**In alignment with SDG 6, our shared global vision is for every disadvantaged and vulnerable person, health facility and school to have reliable access to safe and affordable water by 2030 and beyond.**

Ensuring access to sustainable high-quality water services that meet communities' true needs will require a new approach and outlook on implementation. The sector cannot continue to conduct business as usual if it is to meet this ambitious goal. Existing efforts meet an important need, but ultimately fall short of the intended outcome of SDG 6. It will require the engagement and will of government (at all levels), innovation and scalable service delivery models, adequate funding for covering the full cost of water delivery, community engagement, multi-sector coordination, and greater international cooperation and support.

Taking this into consideration, the Hilton Foundation will make investments in three inter-related focus areas: 1) advancing proven and promising solutions and models, 2) strengthening water governance and in-country systems, and 3) building and disseminating credible and actionable evidence. These three approaches will be applied in an integrated way within the countries where we work in sub-Saharan Africa. By doing so, we seek to accelerate the coverage of reliable access to safe and affordable water for households, health facilities and schools in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda.

Over the next 15-years, the Foundation's investments will focus on efforts at a local administrative level to ensure adequate coverage and the progressive upgrade of quality services. We believe that the piloting and demonstration of solutions at a local administrative level (small town, municipality or district) is an important precursor to full-scale implementation. These locally defined areas will provide the space to test new solutions as well as expand already proven approaches. To ensure promising solutions can thrive and be sustained over time, investments will focus on building the policy environment and capabilities of key stakeholders and institutions (at all levels) to deliver on their responsibilities and full potential. The sustainability of solutions can only be realized if both the hardware (e.g. taps and pipes) and software (e.g. capacity building) components of water delivery are strengthened simultaneously.

By initially focusing efforts at a given local administrative level, we believe that countries and our partners will be well-positioned to replicate and scale successful solutions over the next 15 years – contributing to the ambitious aim of SDG 6.

## Our Historical Commitment to Safe Water

Since the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation was established in 1944, one of its most prominent commitments has been roughly \$140 million to provide access to clean water in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and water-stressed regions in India and Mexico. Earlier investments were predominately focused on targeting impoverished and geographically remote areas with low water access and sanitation coverage and high incidences of water-borne diseases and parasites such as trachoma and guinea worm.

Reaffirming its commitment to safe water access, the Foundation's Board of Directors approved a five-year grant-making strategy in 2010 for achieving measurable impact in this area. From 2011-2015, the Foundation aimed to improve access to safe water as a part of a broader water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) framework for the ultra-poor and disadvantaged in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Mali, India and Mexico.

Over the five-year initiative, the Foundation's Safe Water strategy focused on three programmatic emphases: 1) supporting sustainable and scalable safe water access interventions and systems; 2) strengthening the enabling environment for WASH interventions in targeted countries; and 3) promoting the development, dissemination and adoption of relevant sector-wide knowledge. Recognizing the importance of global action, the strategy was designed to align with international efforts aimed at contributing to the MDGs' water target – to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to a basic water source<sup>1</sup> by 2015.

These past five years helped focus the Foundation's efforts in a more intentional and strategic way. Aligning with the global agenda set by the MDGs, we were able to help provide basic water access to millions of people in remote areas of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as water-stressed regions in India and Mexico. Key achievements over the past five years include:

- Roughly 1.9 million beneficiaries gained access to an improved water source;
- Approximately \$57 million was awarded to support water solutions, and an additional \$88 million was leveraged to support sanitation and hygiene efforts;
- On average, 80 percent of the Foundation-funded water sources are functioning – compared to the sub-Saharan Africa average of 64 percent;
- Local WASH committees were trained to manage and maintain water points, and demonstrated their ability to maintain and sustain water points beyond external intervention;
- The Foundation's MEL partner, Water Institute at UNC, launched three continuous quality improvement pilot projects in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, which assisted in identifying the root causes of underperforming systems as well as solutions to improve the functionality;

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<sup>1</sup> According to WHO/UNICEF, basic water source is defined as protected from contaminations, shared and managed by community members, hauled to point of use, with a collection time of no more than 30 minutes.

- Data generated around water quality has filled a critical data gap, as national water quality databases do not exist in the countries where we work; and
- The Foundation explored innovative technologies to water quality monitoring and management at the source and household levels as well as market-based approaches for water supply such as microcredit schemes and small private enterprise models.

Although there were notable achievements, the Foundation also identified key lessons and insights to improving the availability, quality, reliability and sustainability of water services:

- Services are generally inconvenient and at a subsistent level (20 liters per day per person);
- And, more often than not, the water is unsafe once it gets home, or at the Point of Use (POU);
- The closer the water to the household, the better the quality and the higher the volume used;
- There is a real demand and ability to pay for better services among water users;
- Market-based approaches to water supply are feasible, however, there are very limited examples to follow;
- Countries generally have policies and strategies in place for establishing and improving water services, yet these plans are difficult to implement without functioning systems and institutions; and
- The creation of water supply systems separate from existing government systems is one of the main factors limiting sustainability.

## **From the MDGs to the SDGs: A New Call to Action**

The Millennium Development Goals mobilized international actors and resources to provide millions of people access to water throughout the developing world. Through these efforts, approximately 6.6 billion people today, or more than 90% of the global population, have access to improved water sources, such as a borehole, kiosk or household tap.

Although the sector made enormous progress, access to an improved water source is not equal. Roughly 660 million people still collect water from a distance or from an unprotected source; of these people, nearly half reside in sub-Saharan Africa. Not only are there regional variations in access, but disparities exist between sub-groups, such as rural versus urban and rich versus poor.

Even in cases where access to water was improved, the source is not necessarily safe to drink from. It is estimated that 1.8 billion people worldwide regularly consume water from an improved or unimproved source that is contaminated.

Building on the successes and lessons of the MDGs era, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations Summit in September 2015. This bold plan, comprised of 17 goals and 169 targets, serves to guide global development efforts for the next 15 years - giving the Foundation and the WASH sector a new call to action.

Unlike the MDGs, the 2030 Agenda includes a stand-alone goal on water (SDG 6) that sets out to “ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” With six technical targets, this Goal touches on the entire cycle of water, which includes drinking water, integrated water resource management, and waste management. This allows countries to address the water-related challenges of greatest relevance to their context and stage of development.

Another fundamental shift between the MDGs and SDGs is the emphasis on all, signifying that no one person should be left behind in the global movement for social and economic mobilization over the next 15 years. Future efforts will focus on reducing and eliminating inequities in access between sub-groups, as well as strengthening water services in all settings – not just at the household level. A particular emphasis is given to health facilities and schools.

SDG 6 not only pushes the sector to reduce the number of people unserved, but to address the quality dimensions of water services. It specifically sets out to move citizens up the water service delivery ladder<sup>2</sup> from basic-level access to ‘safely managed water,’ as described by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme. Safely managed water is not only reliable and free of contamination, but on premises, with the highest level of service being a private connection to a piped water network.

Because water is related to other social, economic, and environmental concerns, SDG 6 can go a long way to stimulate other development efforts. The SDGs are designed to serve as a cross-sectoral, integrated approach for global development, and safe water is highly linked with many of the other Goals. For instance, strong governance systems and institutions (Goal 16) are vital for planning and managing effective and sustainable water services, which in turn may help improve the well-being of women and children who tend to be responsible for the collection of water (Goal 5). By addressing the Goals from an inclusive standpoint, there is an opportunity to advance multiple development efforts and truly achieve sustainability.

## **Safe Water Strategy 2017-2021**

Over the past year, the Foundation has been working to re-design its Safe Water grant making strategy, looking to SDG 6 as a guiding framework and determining how best to contribute the Foundation’s relatively limited philanthropic dollars to this ambitious call to action. Particular attention has been given to Target 1 of SDG 6 which is to “achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.” Through a process of stakeholder engagement, reflection on lessons learned, and an updated landscape review, the Foundation has realigned its Safe Water strategy. This five-year strategy serves to guide our work towards a global vision of safe, reliable and affordable water for all by 2030.

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<sup>2</sup> According to WHO/UNICEF, the water service ladder approach is a method of benchmarking and tracking progress at different stages of development: surface water, unimproved, basic water service and safely managed water.

## A Shared Global Vision

We share the vision that every vulnerable and disadvantaged person, school and health facility will have reliable access to safe and affordable water by 2030 and beyond.

## Our Goal

To accelerate the coverage of reliable access to safe and affordable water services for households, health facilities and schools in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda.

## From Vision to Reality: A Shift in Emphasis

SDG 6 pushes countries to move their citizens up the service ladder to safely managed water services. Each rung up the ladder may require greater initial investments, but promises to generate better health and livelihood benefits for households and communities. Some countries are ready to make the transition from basic to safely managed water services, whereas others are still attempting to provide their citizens with basic services and are in need of immediate solutions. Given the dual needs of the sector, the Foundation will continue to improve water access to those without, while laying the foundation for achieving our vision of every vulnerable and disadvantaged person, health facility and school having reliable access to safe and affordable water by 2030.

To transform this ambitious vision to a reality by 2030, there needs to be a shift in how the sector approaches the development, implementation and management of water services. It demands the adoption of an integrated and comprehensive systems-based approach to water service delivery. This goes beyond the installation of hand pumps, pipes and taps (i.e. water infrastructure), to supporting systems, institutions and processes that enable the delivery of services to thrive for all. Embracing this approach, the Foundation seeks to move its work in the following way over the next 15 years:

**Local Action, Global Impact:** The 2030 Agenda provides the sector with a 15-year timeline to make a dent in the safe water challenge. Given the bold challenge of water for all, countries will need to scale up<sup>3</sup> effective solutions. To date, there are limited examples of scalable service delivery models that are financially sustainable, demand-driven and operationally effective. Moreover, attempts to scale up solutions have often been done without addressing key constraints and/or factors for sustainability.

To achieve a wider reach on a sustainable basis, there is a need to take a bottom-up approach to scaling solutions. Over the next 15 years, the Foundation will make long-term commitments at a local administrative level in the countries in which we work, to ensure adequate coverage and the progressive upgrade of quality water services. Locally defined administrative areas of interest to the

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<sup>3</sup> The Foundation uses scale to refer to the sustainable adoption of effective models and practices by a wide range of implementing actors.

Foundation are small towns, municipalities<sup>4</sup> and districts.<sup>5</sup> Within these locally defined areas, the Foundation will support a combination of service delivery models and solutions. Communities have multiple needs for water, and therefore, multiple solutions and technical advances will need to be explored, tested and delivered. In this context, potable water for consumption will be prioritized. Simultaneously, the Foundation will strengthen processes, institutions and systems at all levels of decision-making (local, district and national) to ensure solutions thrive and are sustained beyond external aid and intervention. As successful models and practices are identified, the Foundation will support their adaptation and replication in-country and across sub-Saharan Africa when possible. By taking a localized approach, the Foundation will pave an effective road map for scaling, thereby, reaching a greater number of people with sustained services.

**Multi-disciplined Approach and Networks:** To harmonize efforts and accelerate progress at the local administrative level, the Foundation will facilitate the creation of networks and working relationships between local actors (government, providers, water users and stakeholders) and among implementing partners with complementary skills and expertise. The Foundation is aware that no single organization can address the complexities and multiple dimensions of the safe water challenge. It will take the insights, engagement and action of actors across a range of disciplines and sectors to ensure the water services selected and implemented best meet the expectations and needs of all households, health facilities and schools. The Foundation will bring a group of complementary partners together to test, develop and implement models and practices in a coordinated manner. This work will be guided by a cohesive, integrated strategy that outlines shared goals, objectives and activities over the next five years, with a 15-year vision in mind. The strategy will be designed by in-country implementing partners, in collaboration with government, to ensure the priorities and opportunities identified are responsive to local needs and in line with local decision-makers' water plans. If local government officials do not have a city-wide or district-wide strategy in place, partners will provide guidance and support to see it come to fruition. In turn, this will ensure that services and systems are not developed and implemented inconsistently.

**Strategic Partnerships:** Recognizing that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” the Foundation will seek opportunities to collaborate with other funders and cross-sector players to exchange ideas, align efforts and strategies, and co-invest in initiatives. By working collectively, the Foundation will be able to stretch its relatively limited philanthropic dollars as well as take on riskier investments that promise to generate larger-scale social impact. These efforts will align with government priorities and strategies to leverage existing resources and ensure sustainability of solutions.

## Focus Areas

Through its grant-making, the Foundation seeks to improve the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged throughout the world by: helping communities identify and drive solutions; advancing systems-wide implementation of best practices; leveraging and aligning public and private financing, and supporting networks towards shared goals for systems change.

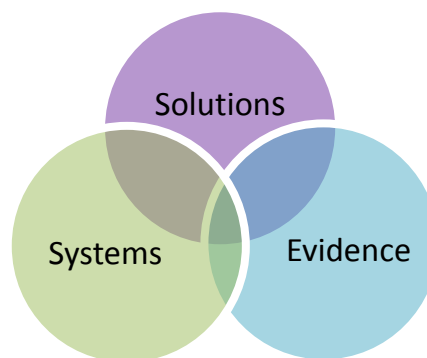
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<sup>4</sup> The Foundation uses municipality to refer to a town or city or its local government

<sup>5</sup> The Foundation uses district to refer to a second-level administrative division within a state or region, similar to a county

In keeping with the Foundation’s approach, we aim to ensure that all communities, with a focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged, have access to reliable and sustainable water services. By adopting a systems-based approach, we believe communities will be a step closer to achieving healthy and productive lives. To support this comprehensive, system-based approach, we will make investments in the following three focus areas:

- 1) Advance Proven and Promising Solutions and Models:** There is no single solution to the issue of safe water. Multiple service delivery models are needed to improve coverage and quality of services. Some existing solutions are working, while others fall short. Effort will be placed on advancing proven solutions as well as identifying and testing new ones.
- 2) Strengthen Water Governance and In-Country Systems:** To ensure new and proven solutions are sustained over time, the Foundation will strengthen in-country institutions and capacities of service providers and government authorities at all levels (local, district and national), who are ultimately responsible for meeting the needs of all water users.
- 3) Build and Disseminate Credible and Actionable Evidence:** To influence policy, practice and investments at the national and global levels, the Foundation will build the evidence base for solutions and address key knowledge gaps. Credible evidence is essential to support the replication and scale up of solutions.



Over the next five years, we will work to simultaneously strengthen each of these focus areas, adjusting the approach to fit the context of the country and selected district. Proven solutions, such as microcredit schemes and piped water networks, will be promoted and marketed for replication, while promising solutions and models in areas such as financing and water quality treatment need to be identified and vetted, as well as provided the time to incubate and be tested. Key leaders and institutions require the skills and support to develop water policies, regulations and strategies, as well as systems and institutions to execute development plans. Service providers may have the capacity to deliver water delivery solutions, but may be hindered in doing so without a strong policy and regulatory environment and accurate data and information. By applying and strengthening all three areas, we believe that we can meet our goal of accelerating coverage to safe, reliable and affordable water in the countries where we work.

## **Focus Area One: Advance Proven and Promising Solutions and Models**

Over the past several decades, the water sector has made tremendous progress towards addressing the issue of safe water access. Existing solutions – predominately community-shared water sources - have met an important and immediate need for those living in low-resource settings in sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is still room for improvement in addressing the quality and quantity dimensions of water service delivery beyond access. Although well-intentioned, organizations tend to look for a silver bullet solution to meet the multifaceted needs of a given community, when in fact, multiple services and technical advances are required. In more cases than not, hand pumps and taps (i.e. hardware) are built without taking into consideration the software aspects needed (e.g. financing, management structures, etc.) to sustain water services over time. To overcome these challenges, there is a need to explore new ways of working and ideas for water service delivery.

In response, the Foundation will support the advancement of proven models for water service delivery as well as the identification and testing of new models and solutions at a local administrative level. These locally defined areas (small town, municipality or district) provide the testing ground for new approaches, processes and technologies, as well as for perfecting effective models. Areas for further exploration may include: cost-effective water delivery mechanisms, creative solutions for financing, efficient management structures and water quality treatment and monitoring technologies. The type of interventions tested and demonstrated in each country will be adjusted to fit the local context, as each country is at a different stage of development with varying policy priorities. Proven and promising water delivery models may offer a variety of services to meet communities' true needs and demands for water, such as a borehole, public kiosk or household tap. Services will match communities' willingness and ability to pay, creating a steady cash flow for current operations as well as for future improvements and service growth. As we have learned over the years, households and communities are able and/or willing to pay reasonable fees for water services that are convenient and consistent. Although there will always be a need for subsidized programs, as the most vulnerable may not be able to afford the full cost of services, financing mechanisms such as microfinance may empower many households to invest in their own solutions.

While the delivery of water services may require multiple types of utilities, the Foundation believes that there is a role for the private sector to deliver services that not only meet communities' expectations, but are financially viable and operationally effective. The Foundation will look for opportunities to build the capacity of local service providers to adopt a business-minded approach as well as to create local entrepreneurs to deliver services at scale. Given that some communities reside in challenging settings, the Foundation will explore innovative, cost-effective strategies and locally-appropriate technologies to help accelerate steps and catalyze the development and implementation of services that provide safe (at the point of use and source), reliable and affordable water.

### *Specific activities include:*

- Rolling out proven models for increasing reliable access to safe and affordable water;
- Testing and developing new technologies and service delivery models that can be replicated and scaled;
- Testing and incubating innovations for improving and monitoring water quality at the point-of-use;



- Developing business models that supply the demand for water on a sustainable basis;
- Strengthening capacity of service providers, particularly entrepreneurs, to plan and deliver services;
- Supporting the design, planning and capacity building of public-private partnerships between local governments and enterprises who can operate small piped water supply systems in rural communities; and
- Exploring new and innovative financing mechanisms, such as social impact investing, to support the scale up of water solutions

## **Focus Area Two: Strengthen Water Governance and In-Country Systems**

The convergence of technological solutions and monetized service delivery models provides economic incentives for providers and private entrepreneurs to deliver services efficiently and at scale. Yet, private markets and innovation can only thrive when supported by strong institutional arrangements, favorable policies, development strategies and regulatory frameworks, capable leaders, and robust planning, monitoring and reporting systems at all administrative levels (local-regional-national). In most cases, low-income countries have adopted national policies and strategies for establishing and/or improving water service levels. However, authorities tend to face various bottlenecks for delivering on their responsibilities, from limited technical expertise to shortfall in public funds. Moreover, there is generally a lack of coordination between different levels of government within and across sectors, resulting in the duplication of efforts or insufficient water services for households, schools and health facilities. This has been compounded by recent policies to devolve responsibility and authority of water service planning and oversight from the national to the local level of government (i.e. decentralization reform), where resources are further restrained and competing demands to deliver other imperative public services exist.

In response, the Foundation will support efforts to strengthen water governance and in-country systems so promising and proven solutions can thrive and be replicated. Governance is how power and authority is used to manage a country's public goods and services at all levels.

Improving water governance and in-country systems will require strengthening the capacities and capabilities of the institutions and individuals responsible for developing the policies, regulations and plans for water service delivery. Particular attention will be given to the lowest level of government, where the authorities and civil servants are on the frontlines of planning and managing services under their jurisdictions. In addition to capable leaders, it requires putting in place adequate financing, monitoring and reporting systems to oversee the effective use of investments. As water is vital for the health and livelihoods of all, mechanisms are needed to engage a broad range of stakeholders in the decision-making process. "Bottom-up" and

*"Decentralized governance, carefully planned, effectively implemented and appropriately managed, can lead to significant improvement in the welfare of people at the local level, the cumulative effect of which can lead to enhanced human development... The key to human development-friendly decentralized governance is to ensure that the voices and concerns of the poor, especially women, help guide its design, implementation and monitoring." - UNDP*

inclusive decision-making is key to developing policies and plans that represent the needs of various socio-economic groups, sectors and settings. To ensure the efficacy of services, roles and responsibilities must be defined among key authorities, service providers and institutions at all levels.

*Specific activities include:*

- Strengthening the human resources and technical capacities of government (at all levels) to formulate policies and plans for universal access to water;
- Building trust, forging relationships, fueling collaboration, and galvanizing widespread engagement and ownership amongst local governments and the citizens they serve;
- Promoting the development of policies, regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements that support locally appropriate solutions and technologies, and coordination across authorities and sectors;
- Developing reliable monitoring and reporting mechanisms to inform decision-making and drive accountability; and
- Improving the targeting and effectiveness of investments by national governments.

### **Focus Area Three: Build and Disseminate Credible and Actionable Evidence**

The Foundation will support a range of research and evaluation studies to close the knowledge-practice gap in the water sector. Evidence will be generated through a range of research studies, a formal monitoring, evaluation and learning program, and practical experience from implementing partners. A key component will include devising a local-level learning and evaluation framework to determine the effectiveness of new service delivery models as well as assess their potential to reach a larger number of people on a sustainable basis. These demonstrations will not only examine the scalability of a model, but look at the potential benefits and costs associated with different service levels. Currently, there is a dearth of evidence on the conditions necessary for high-quality service levels to contribute toward economic growth and poverty alleviation. The conditions and management structures necessary to sustain higher-quality services, such as a small-piped water scheme, are a key knowledge gap for the field as well. Studies will also focus on identifying ways to improve already existing approaches that are meeting an important need, but falling short of delivering optimal results. Evidence generated from these efforts will be shared with the sector and in-country decision-makers to inform policy improvements and planning strategies, influence implementation practices, and advocate for increased investment from government to replicate and scale promising solutions.

We are firm believers that collaboration and cross-pollination between countries is an invaluable part of accelerating progress, and therefore, we will facilitate opportunities for partners in the core countries to exchange experiences, cross-learn, and collaborate. We will also explore opportunities to share lessons and evidence with other sector leaders and funders to mobilize resources towards effective solutions, leveraging additional resources, coordinating philanthropic and aid efforts, and generating larger-scale impact.

*Specific activities include:*

- Building the evidence base to unlock in-country sources of funding (public and private) to cover the entire life-cost cycle of water services;
- Developing local-level performance monitoring and evaluation plans to demonstrate proven and promising models;
- Implementing monitoring and evaluation plans for water quality;
- Supporting operations research, cost-effectiveness and feasibility studies;
- Implementing Process Monitoring and Outcome Evaluation; and
- Disseminating best practices, lessons and evidence through publications, convenings, and other knowledge-sharing platforms.

## Our Ambitions and Results

By 2021, we seek to achieve the following:

- At least 1 million vulnerable and disadvantaged people will have reliable access to safe and affordable water
- At least 100 health facilities will have reliable access to safe and affordable water
- At least 100 schools will have reliable access to safe and affordable water
- Six locally-focused demonstration sites – one demonstration site in each country
- Six SDG WASH Philanthropy Platforms – one in each target country
- New solutions will be developed and tested to increase coverage of reliable access to safe and affordable services
- Number of Municipal Water Development plans developed and implemented
- Amount of in-country and international (public and private) investments mobilized and leveraged

## Risk Management

Traditionally, the Foundation has relied on the expertise and capacity of well-established, international non-government organizations to deliver community-shared water solutions. Existing approaches to the issue of safe water are meeting an important basic need, but fall short of reaching the intended outcome of SDG 6. In order to accelerate progress, there is a need to complement traditional approaches with new and innovative service delivery models that can be replicated and scaled.

Finding new, innovative solutions that can withstand different challenging contexts will entail experimentation and risk taking. Consequently, the Foundation will explore new ideas and take risks on less proven approaches. Although investments may have a potentially higher risk of failure, they could advance models that promise impact and systemic change if successful. In cases where our

investments do not produce the intended outcome, we will learn, adapt and iterate. By taking high-risk, high-reward bets, the Foundation can expect to truly innovate and propel the field forward.

Although the Foundation will take measures to adequately assess and mitigate potential risks, due to the nature of development work, there are certain political, operational and security risks to be considered. Political instability, economic uncertainty and security threats can cause significant delays in implementation and even derail our investments. Typically, our partner organizations are vigilant in keeping abreast of emerging threats and have contingency and mitigation plans in place.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Over the last 25 years, the Foundation has drawn upon insights and lessons learned to help redefine and set a new standard for the water sector. Over the next 15 years, we will look to raise the bar on service levels and drive system change by supporting research and evaluation that focuses on addressing key knowledge gaps, exploring different models of service delivery, and strengthening systems (markets, financing mechanisms, and institutions). Recognizing there is no “one-stop” shop, we will need to solicit the expertise of several partners with monitoring and evaluation expertise across varying disciplines. We intend to engage key research and knowledge management actors that bring specific expertise in the areas of impact evaluation, technology development, water safety, policy research, financial analysis, governance and business acumen. Throughout our monitoring and evaluation efforts, we will continuously revisit our assumptions, learn from our experiences, and adapt our grant-making approach to apply lessons and best support the work of our implementing partners. We will also disseminate actionable knowledge about problems and solutions to inform the global WASH sector and motivate the actions of others to plan and deliver better services.

## Conclusion

SDG 6 raises the bar for the water sector. It pushes us to reach the last remaining households without basic access, while setting a new standard for quality of water services. The investments we have provided over the past two decades have made significant contributions to the field and in the lives of millions. However, if the global community wants to strive for bigger and better outcomes, we recognize the need to look at the issue of safe water differently and act boldly, building on our Founder's motto of "Think Big, Act Big, Dream Big." Over the next five years, we will accelerate action on safe, reliable and affordable water for all in the countries where we work, with a focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged. This challenge is vast and complex and cannot be tackled merely through the efforts of one motivated group. To truly spark progress and achieve sustainability, the engagement and action of all stakeholders and actors is required, with country governments taking the lead. As we apply our three-prong approach, we will work collectively with the sector and in partnership with country actors to make this globally shared vision of water for all a reality by 2030.

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