

SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

Flagship Initiative

Workstream 1 — Promote human-rights-based approaches to water, sanitation, wastewater, and water quality across all contexts

Interactive Dialogue (a): Water for People

2026 United Nations Water Conference

Part 1 — Submission details

Submitting organisation	<i>World Vision</i>
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Date of submission	<i>18 June 2026</i>

Part 2 — Flagship Initiative

Initiative title <i>A short, clear name (maximum 15 words).</i>
Reaching Universal WASH Services Coverage in Defined Areas
Guiding question(s) addressed <i>Indicate which of the guiding questions above the initiative addresses (state the number(s)). Multiple questions may be selected where relevant.</i>
#2, 4 and 5
Problem <i>Describe the systemic challenge that the initiative seeks to address and explain why a coordinated, multi-stakeholder response is required. Explain why this issue is important for advancing the human rights to water and sanitation. (Maximum 150 words)</i>
Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 sets an ambitious goal of ensuring access to water and sanitation for all. This means that all people have access to water, sanitation and hygiene services that are safe, affordable, and sustained. This is an aspirational goal, and one that will never be fully achieved in a strict technical sense, because populations and communities are always changing. Because of the ambitiousness of the goal, investments from governments and funders are often spread out resulting in a perceived lack of progress that makes it difficult to build momentum and excitement from both potential funders and from government stakeholders.
Description <i>Describe the initiative, its overall vision, and the shared objective it seeks to achieve. Explain why the initiative is catalytic, transformational, and capable of mobilising stakeholders around a common goal. (Maximum 250 words)</i>
Therefore, a Universal Services Coverage (USC) approach that focuses all actors on a specific geographic area (or “district”) allows for significant measurable change in a small amount of time that can be leveraged for catalytic change. The underpinning of the whole initiative is mobile data collection that allows for visualisation of progress and transparency for all stakeholders (preferably through mWater). Using a combination of spatial analysis and survey data, each USC initiative works with government in a defined administrative area (a “district” or “sub-district”) to identify and reach unserved or underserved communities. As new water points are constructed, water systems and water points are mapped, and using

population data that is freely available, districts can be shown on a map to reach 90% drinking water coverage. Household sanitation and hygiene initiatives can also be tracked through household data collection until the whole “district” has access to WASH services. Since all the data is already in a digital format, private operators or government entities can use the mWater system for water service fee collection and to track water point breakdown, to allow for long term sustainability well after the initial infrastructure push is over. You can see more of the spatial approach to WASH services here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a73563c0d11b433fa35e0bd10a546087>

Transformational impact and expected results

Describe how the initiative will drive systemic change at scale. Outline measurable outcomes, expected benefits, and accountability mechanisms. Explain how the initiative moves beyond dialogue and commitments towards concrete action and results. (Maximum 250 words)

In partnership with government, the goal of each USC initiative is to reach 90%+ coverage of the targeted district's population with basic water and/or sanitation services. During planning and implementation, USC initiatives will:

1. **Empower the most vulnerable and marginalised.** USC initiatives offer opportunities to empower the most vulnerable communities. Each USC initiative should consider potential vulnerabilities (e.g. poverty, disabilities, and gender) and how vulnerable households can be prioritised.
2. **Align with government priorities and boundaries.** In general, the chosen administrative boundary should align with the service authority—that is, the level of government responsible for providing water and sanitation services.
3. **Increase collaboration and coordination across stakeholders.** Planning for USC requires close collaboration and coordination with the district government and other water supply actors working in the district. USC initiatives should leverage the participation and investments of others.
4. **Strengthen sustainable service delivery.** USC is not only about building new WASH infrastructure—it must also be about strengthening the capacity of local government and local operators to deliver services sustainably. “Hard” interventions like new infrastructure must be combined with “soft” interventions like asset management, billing and accounting, monitoring and regulation, and water resources management. USC initiatives adopt a “service-centred approach” that supports the sustainability of the service and not just the construction of infrastructure.

Through spatial data and household baseline and endline surveys, coverage rates for water, sanitation, and hygiene rates will be measured and celebrated when they reach over 90%.

Human rights and inclusion focus

Explain how the initiative advances the human rights to water and sanitation, including the AAAQ principles, and benefits people in vulnerable situations. (Maximum 150 words)

A focus on 90% coverage of WASH services ensures that we do not leave the most vulnerable behind. Too often, if a WASH project comes in and raises access from 30% to 60%, that was because the project prioritised the low hanging fruit and the easiest people to reach. By setting our target at the 90% level, we are intentionally targeting the hardest to reach and including the most vulnerable as a key part of program planning.

Alignment with SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework

Explain how the initiative contributes to one or more SDG 6 accelerators: financing and investment, innovation and technology, capacity development, and data and information systems. (Maximum 150 words)

This initiative centralises data within the mWater system and allows government and implementing partners to contribute to and utilise the same data source. In addition, focusing on a specific area with a measurable success point (90% access) allows for more concrete investment from donors and rallies stakeholders around common goals. In the experience of World Vision, individual donors are more excited about supporting a specific area they can see on a map, than generally supporting WASH work globally or in a specific country. Working in defined USC areas will help catalyse additional investment, and the use of the mWater asset management features will allow for ongoing tracking of water payments and long-term sustainability.

Evidence Base and Strategic Rationale (Mandatory)

Provide evidence from existing or past projects, programmes, policies, partnerships, or initiatives demonstrating why the proposed approach is likely to succeed. Include measurable results, lessons learned, evaluations, and references. (Maximum 300 words)

We first launched a large universal service coverage effort in Rwanda. From 2019 through 2023, we worked with the government in 39 sectors across the country to reach universal access to water. All of our data and memos of completion can be found here: <https://portal.mwater.co/#/dashboards/a064bcf4921342278a62cc3c03929d09>. Building on lessons from Rwanda, World Vision's new 5-year Business Plan (2026-2030) encourages priority countries to select a "district" for USC. More information on these plans can be found here: <https://mappingthebluethread.global/place-based-initiatives/universal-service-coverage>. We currently have 22 countries with active USC areas.

From our experience over multiple contexts and working with multiple different governments, we feel strongly that this is the way forward for World Vision, and we think it can be a strong model for other stakeholders to partner and expand their reach.

Builds on existing efforts

Describe how the initiative strengthens, complements, or scales existing commitments, platforms, and initiatives. (Maximum 150 words)

The USC initiative is a great way to bring together multiple focus areas that are already happening in the sector:

- Direct implementation of water systems
- Professionalisation of WASH services so WASH operators see the running of water systems as a viable business
- Integration of geospatial data for better planning and decision making
- Building sanitation markets to catalyse growth for improved sanitation
- Innovative financing to snowball from one project directly into the next with repayable financing

All of the major WASH focus areas can fit within the USC umbrella to allow for alignment of vision and strong partnership between stakeholders.

Partners, governance and stakeholder engagement

Describe the stakeholders involved and explain governance arrangements, leadership structures, and accountability mechanisms. (Maximum 150 words)

These initiatives should be government- led. Partners should support governments in making larger USC master plans, and then step up to provide funding for part of the plan in

coordination with the government. In this way, government and partners can look for areas with overlapping interests within the larger plan, and work can be spread equitably through the country with different stakeholders responsible for different areas. World Vision has the expertise to help craft these master plans and train all stakeholders in the mWater mapping and survey tools, but ultimately the government is the head of the initiative.

Existing Member State / stakeholder support

Identify Member States, organisations, or stakeholders that currently support, participate in, or have endorsed the initiative. (Maximum 100 words)

We are implementing USC projects in the following countries with strong government support and commitment: Angola, Cambodia, Chad, DRC, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Niger, PNG, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Potential Member State / stakeholder support

Identify potential Member States, organisations, or stakeholders that could support, champion, finance, or participate in the initiative. (Maximum 100 words)

World Vision has significant WASH programming in 42 countries across six regions, and has strong relationships with many of these governments. Any of these member states could be strong advocates. The full list is here: <https://mappingthebluethread.global/where-we-work/>.

Existing financing / resource mobilisation

Describe any existing funding, investments, technical assistance, partnerships, or resource-mobilisation mechanisms that currently support the initiative. (Maximum 130 words)

World Vision has a 5-year Business Plan (2026-2030) where we have committed over 1 billion dollars from our donors and partners to WASH implementation work. We estimate that about 200 million dollars will be spent on USC. We are pushing for more co-financing from governments to increase this overall effort and are expanding our work in repayable and innovative financing to bring more banks and financial institutions into the WASH space. We are aiming to have 30% government co-financing on USC projects.

Potential financing / resource mobilisation and financing strategy

Describe how the initiative will mobilise the financial resources, investments, technical assistance, innovation, partnerships, and political support required for implementation and scale-up. Identify potential funding sources, financing mechanisms, investment opportunities, and strategic partnerships over the medium to long term, including how it could leverage existing programmes, financing facilities, donor commitments, public budgets, private-sector engagement, or blended finance. (Maximum 300 words)

In a specific “district”, the first step is to map all existing water points and their functionality status. This allows for a clear visualisation of who is served and who is unserved in each district, and then costs can be clearly articulated to show the path to reach USC. This specific need is more attractive to donors who can more easily see the benefit of investment. This is also a great way to encourage governments to give more towards their WASH commitments. In Rwanda, for example, we were able to agree with the government that they would pay for 30% of every new water system while World Vision would pay for 70%. This blended approach allowed us both to expand our work more quickly and reach a larger number of people.

In addition, the digital first approach lends itself to more transparency that allows for the option of more repayable financing. By mapping where water systems will go and showing the population distribution on a map, private operators can model how much funding they will receive in operating the system. This transparency allows for more funders to be willing to

jump in when they see that they will eventually be able to recoup their capital expenditures to be able to then invest that funding in future water projects.

Implementation horizon

The medium- to longer-term timeframe for delivery beyond the 2026 Conference. (Maximum 70 words)

Each USC district has a 2-5 year time horizon to complete full WASH services coverage. The key first step is getting buy in from all stakeholders around a specific area, which is something that can happen at the 2026 conference. Once buy-in is achieved, projects can expand rapidly and we can start to have a drumbeat of success as we celebrate “districts” that have reached Universal Services Coverage.