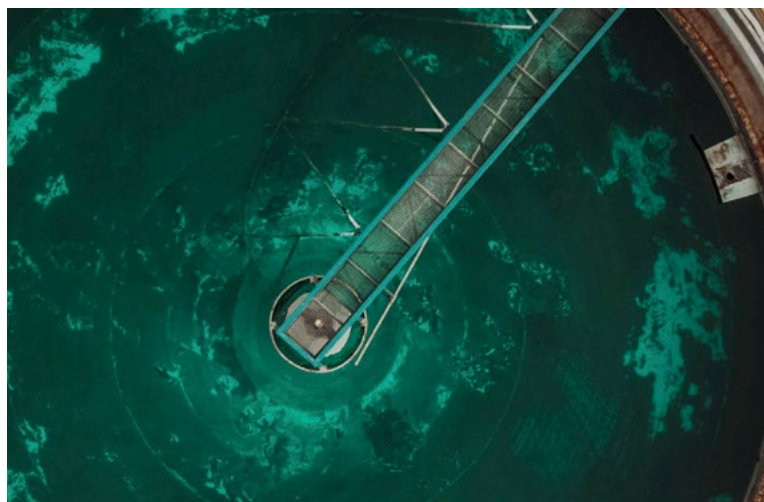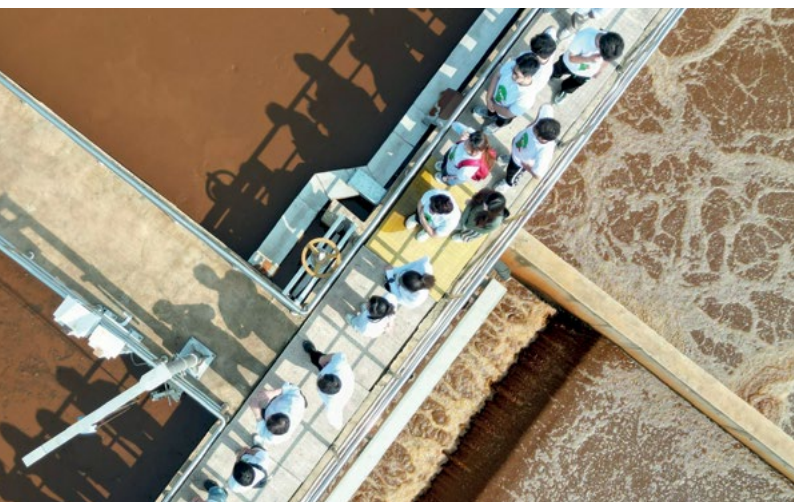# Youth Action for SDG 6

IWA & Grundfos
Fellowship Final Report

1st cohort

GRUNDFOS

IWA
the international
water association

Youth Action for SDG 6

IWA & Grundfos
Fellowship Final Report

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Table of Contents

Youth Fellows during the visit in Grundfos HQ, Bjerringbro (Denmark)

1. Background

The main outcome of the *United Nations Water Conference 2023 (UNWC)*, held in New York City in March 2023, was the *Water Action Agenda* (WAA), which is "The collection of all water-related voluntary commitments to accelerate progress in the second half of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 and the second half of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UN DESA, 2022a). The WAA commitments are intended to be implemented and scaled up following the *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework*, a unifying initiative that "aims to deliver fast results at an increased scale as part of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030" (United Nations Water, 2020).

Youth are an important stakeholder in the WAA and, ultimately, will play an essential role in realising *SDG 6*, which is the global goal to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Young people, as civil society stakeholders, are "expected and encouraged to drive the implementation towards the globally agreed water-related goals and targets at the country level in an inclusive and action-oriented manner" and are expected to "implement, support, advocate, and participate in follow-up and review" (UN DESA,

2022b). More generally, the UN recognises the importance of involving youth in any decision-making process. In 2003, the General Assembly upheld the commitment to youth by adopting resolution 58/133, reiterating the importance of youth participation at all levels. *A recent UN policy brief* provides concrete guidance on how to promote meaningful youth engagement that "advances the achievement of sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, and gender equality goals" (United Nations, 2023).

The UN defines 'youth' as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This definition, while not universally agreed, serves as a basis for understanding and addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by young people worldwide. In the International Water Association (IWA), 'Young Water Professionals' (YWP) are those 35 years old and younger who are involved or interested in the water sector. Youth-led organisations and activities at the UNWC include Youth4ClimateLive, Youth-Led Solutions Initiative and Youth4Peace.

IWA-Grundfos Youth Action for SDG 6 Fellows (1st cohort) – from left to right: Hadi Toure Guindo, Krisztian Mark Balla, Krithika Iyer Shivakumar, Chelsea Hayward, Charles Shachinda, Farokh Iaqa Kakar, Marina Batalini de Macedo, Muhammad Anique Azam, Inês Breda, Pabel Cervantes-Avilés, Sudipti Arora, Yang Villa and Jacob Amengor

*Youth Fellows at the UN 2023 Water Conference,
New York, USA*

The WAA provides opportunities for youth involvement, but it is unclear how this is facilitated under each commitment. A cursory search of the *841 voluntary commitments* for the keyword 'youth' yields 509 results, 60% of the total. Many of the search results do not elaborate on how youth are to be involved in commitments. Moreover, many commitments do not contain any documents under the 'Progress Report' tab. Therefore, a question remains: more than a year into the implementation of the WAA, how are organisations involving youth in their commitments?

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the agency in charge of the WAA, is currently monitoring the progress of the voluntary commitments. The IWA and Grundfos 'Youth Action for SDG 6' Fellows have undertaken this project to support the UN DESA monitoring process, in particular by shedding light on the engagement of youth stakeholders in the realisation of the commitments.

The IWA-Grundfos Youth Action for SDG 6 Fellowship is an initiative to bring global youth closer to diplomacy and advocacy. It is a partnership between two organisations committed to youth leadership development in the water sector. The IWA recognises the importance of nurturing the next generation of water professionals. Through initiatives like the YWP community, IWA empowers young members to build their careers within the water sector. Grundfos is a renowned Danish company specialising in pumps and water solutions, with a global impact in the field of water management and sustainability. According to Grundfos, building future leaders with a global understanding of water challenges and opportunities is a top priority to accelerate water action.

In March 2023, the Fellows participated in the UNWC where they gained first-hand knowledge and experience in the process of international multi-stakeholder dialogue which led to the creation of the WAA. In December 2023, IWA and Grundfos published the outcomes of the first year of the Fellowship. The *publication*, which was launched at the IWA Water and Development Congress in Kigali, Rwanda, highlights the important role that young people played in the UN 2030 SDG Agenda.

As a result of their first-hand experiences at the UNWC and in completing the IWA-Grundfos publication, the Fellows have undertaken this project to enhance youth engagement in realising the WAA.

2. **Objectives, Output and Theory of Change**

The objective of the project is to support the organisations and coalitions that submitted voluntary commitments to the WAA – the commitment-bearers – to be more accountable for youth engagement in realising their respective commitments. To achieve this objective, the project output is the Youth Accountability Framework, a tool designed to raise awareness among commitment-bearers and hold them accountable for engaging youth.

Table 1 summarises the project's Theory of Change and provides the desired immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes resulting from the project.

Table 1. Project Theory of Change

Our challenges today	• There is a lack of accountability mechanisms for the Water Action Agenda. There is only optional self-reporting. • There are only a few youth-led or youth-represented coalitions and partnerships represented in the Water Action Agenda. • There is a lack of known entry points or opportunities for youth engagement in the Agenda commitments.
Our proposed intervention	The Youth Accountability Framework is a tool that enhances the awareness of commitment-bearers and holds them accountable for youth engagement.
Desired immediate outcomes *(1 year)*	Employing the Youth Accountability Framework will bring the commitment-bearers and youth stakeholders together in a constructive engagement and relationship. Within 1 year of this project: • Commitment-bearers will be able to develop an action plan on how to engage with youth stakeholders, and how to involve them in implementing their commitments. • Youth stakeholders will be aware and empowered to find entry points for engagement with commitment-bearers, beginning with constructive dialogue.
Desired intermediate outcomes *(1–3 years)*	The Youth Accountability Framework will be published, utilised and regularly updated with case studies and new knowledge. More organisations will be inspired to adopt, tailor and implement the Framework not only in the context of the Water Action Agenda, but more generally in their organisational strategy and regular operations.
Desired long-term impact *(Beyond 3 years)*	Through collaboration between commitment-bearers and youth stakeholders, a significant portion of the commitments will be realised, resulting in a substantial contribution to achieving SDG 6 targets.

2024 IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition in Toronto, Canada. From left to right Chelsea Hayward (Youth Fellow), Prof. Kala Vairavamoorthy (IWA ED), Krithika Iyer Shivakumar (Youth Fellow)

3. Conceptual Foundations

What is accountability?

Accountability refers to the obligation or willingness of an individual or organisation to accept responsibility for their actions, decisions and behaviours. In the context of this project, commitment-bearers are deemed to have accountability to the youth as stakeholders in the fulfilment of their respective WAA commitments.

Concepts of accountability

According to Bustin (2014), an efficient accountability method should account for 7 pillars that will access different aspects of the individual or organisation in terms of their capacity to respond to their obligations, communicate it to the broader public and include the perceptions obtained from the accountability back into their process, so it can be improved.

The 7 pillars proposed by Bustin (2014) were adapted for the context of the WAA and were used in the development of the accountability tool. Their final definitions are presented here bellow:

(1) **Responsibility**, in brief, is recognising and accepting one's duties or obligations. It is the foundation of accountability.

(2) **Answerability** is providing explanations for one's actions, thus promoting transparency and trust.

(3) **Trust** is the confidence of others in one's reliability and integrity. Trust facilitates accountability.

(4) **Transparency** is making information accessible and understandable, thus enabling independent assessment and external accountability.

(5) **Consequences** are positive or negative outcomes based on performance: these may reinforce or weaken accountability.

(6) **Learning and improvement** involves using accountability for one's growth and development. Learning shifts the focus from blame to improvement.

(7) **Authority and power** refer to the power dynamics and relationships with others. Authority and power often require limits to be responsibly used.

Approaches to accountability

There are many approaches to accountability, including participatory methods and multi-stakeholder engagement. For this project, two approaches were prioritised in the development of the accountability tool, namely a *youth-centred approach* and an *outcome-oriented approach*.

A *youth-centred approach* is a methodology that prioritises the voices, needs and perspectives of youth in the individual or organisation actions and results. Therefore, this approach was used in the development of the tool to reflect youth perspectives and to analyse the efficient engagement of youth in the WAA and the water sector.

Secondly, an *outcome-oriented approach* is the methodology that emphasises outcomes and impact measurement to hold stakeholders (including youth themselves) accountable, allowing them to clearly visualise their strongness and their weakness to achieve their results intended. Therefore, to enhance a process of strategic planning and learning and improvement for their contributions to the water sector, this approach was also employed in the development of the tool.

Model for accountability

The UNFPA (2019) sets out six steps for establishing accountability, which were followed in the development of the accountability tool. These are:

1. Identify your accountability focus
2. Map your accountability ecosystem
3. Build your accountability network
4. Establish measurable indicators
5. Identify available data, and where required generate your own
6. Analyse the data to inform the development of key advocacy asks

The project addresses steps 1, 4, 5, and 6 by introducing a Framework to support commitment-bearers in assessing their level of accountability using 7 pillars and with measurable indicators. The tool does not cover steps 2 and 3 which are dependent on the specific context of commitment-bearers.

4. **Methodology and Timeline**

The project was divided into three stages – pre-analysis, analytical work feedback – and reporting stage. In the pre-analysis stage, the background and rationale for the project were established, and various tools were developed for analytical work. In the analytical work stage, the tools were applied and refined, resulting in key findings. In the feedback stage, stakeholders were engaged to gather more insights into the Youth Accountability Framework. The reporting stage consists of drafting and submitting this final report. The full project timeline is shown in Appendix 2.

Pre-analysis stage

In the pre-analysis stage, two key tasks were undertaken:

1. Conduct an environmental scan
2. Develop the analytical tools

The environmental scan sought to identify any ongoing efforts to monitor the progress of the WAA. This consisted of desktop research to list and describe any ongoing activities to monitor the WAA as a whole or as individual commitments. This task also involved getting in contact with organisations that are conducting such monitoring activities.

In parallel to the environmental scan, two analytical tools were developed: (i) the assessment rubric, and (ii) the accountability framework. Both tools were developed as Excel matrices.

Developing the assessment rubric entailed identifying available information categories on the individual commitments, as presented in the *Excel list* of the commitments. Based on the available information categories, assessment parameters were then identified, including impact towards SDG 6, geographic and sectoral representation, and details on financing. In addition, parameters that required some degree of extrapolation were identified, including youth involvement and the presence of a built-in monitoring mechanism. Each parameter was given a scoring scheme. The final assessment rubric is shown in Appendix 3.

Developing the accountability framework entailed refining the accountability concepts (adapted from Bustin, 2014) into seven pillars. For each pillar, a ladderised assessment scheme (low/medium/high) was developed. Potential indicators were also identified for each pillar. The final accountability framework is shown in Appendix 4.

Analytical work stage

At the analytical work stage, two key tasks were undertaken:

1. Rapid assessment of all commitments
2. Desktop application of the accountability framework on the shortlisted commitments.

For the rapid assessment of all commitment, a structured review was made for all the 841 commitments of the WAA, developed in the pre-analysis stage. To this task, it was necessary to define the assessment rubric and the scale of evaluation.

Regarding the assessment rubric, the following question was discussed during a group session "What is important for us to evaluate and that will help us to decide on a sub-group of actions to develop an accountability framework?" To answer this question, the following points were highlighted: (i) the importance of evaluating the impact that the commitments have on achieving the SDG targets, (ii) the involvement of youth as beneficiaries and partners, since the focus of the accountability framework is on youth engagement, (iii) the involvement of vulnerable communities, since we were also aiming at transformative commitments, (iv) geographical representation, so the actions are not aiming only at the Global North (v) sector representation, and (vi) how well structured the commitment is in terms of financial viability and continuous monitoring.

Additionally, determining a scale of evaluation is also important to allow comparison between the different commitments, after they are assessed. To achieve this, we have provided a normalised scale, ranging from 0 to 1, according to the number of components evaluated. With this scale, all the assessment rubrics present the same weight in

the final evaluation. Different weights can be later attributed to each one of the rubrics, if the group wants to compare the commitments within different perspectives. The complete list of the assessment rubrics and their scale of evaluation is presented in Appendix 3.

Based on the assessment rubrics and their scale of evaluation, all 841 were reviewed and scored. As some assessment rubrics may be more important than others depending on the context of evaluation (e.g. to evaluate the economic aspects of the commitment, the assessment rubric "financial viability" is more important than the others), it was assigned different weights to each rubric to evaluate different contexts. Four configurations of weight assignments, called scenarios, were developed. Each scenario generated a distinct shortlist of top 10 commitments, resulting in a long list of 40 commitments. The scenarios and the resulting shortlists are shown in Appendix 5.

From the long list, 12 commitments were chosen for a desktop application of the accountability framework. Additionally, a number of commitments from the long list stood out as coming from organisations that the Fellows can easily reach out to for the next stage. With the general agreement of the Fellows, this selection of commitments became the target organisations for testing, here called alpha testing.

Feedback stage

In the feedback stage, two key tasks were undertaken:

1. Alpha testing of the accountability framework with the target organisations
2. Conducting a workshop at the World Water Congress and Exhibition (WWCE) in Toronto.

The objective of alpha testing is to gather initial feedback from a targeted list of commitment-bearers. A total of six organisations were contacted, and all agreed to be interviewed. The list of organisations and interviewees is shown in Appendix 6. To enable the interviewees to apply the accountability framework, a survey tool was developed.

The WWCE workshop was designed to be the formal launch of the Youth Accountability Framework, in addition to gathering additional feedback from workshop participants. The workshop proposal is shown in Appendix 7.

Reporting stage

In the reporting stage, this final report was drafted and submitted to IWA for comments. Acceptance of the report signifies the final close of the Fellowship.
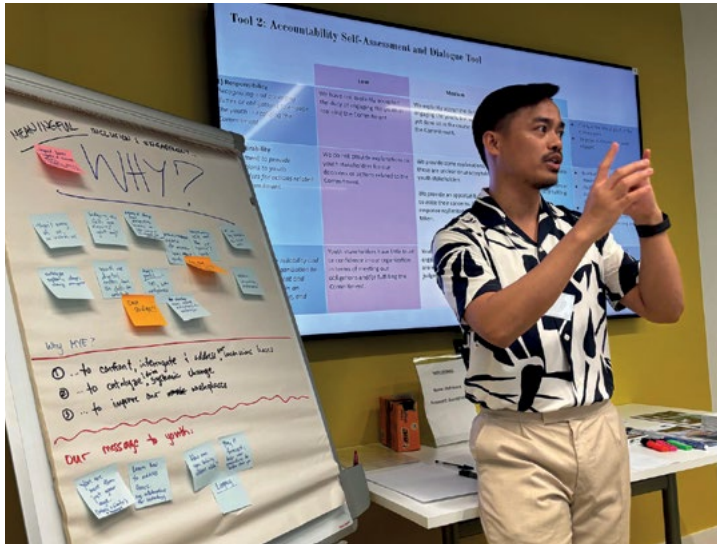
Upper corner right: IWA & Grundfos Youth Action for SDG 6 Fellowship Meet and Greet at the 2024 IWA World Water Congress & Exhibition in Toronto, Canada. Upper corner left and below: IWA HQ visit, London, UK

5. **Results and Outcomes**

Rapid assessment of all commitments

After defining the assessment rubrics, a systematic review of the WAA commitments was performed. In terms of their impact on SDG 6 targets, an average of 3.4 targets was obtained for all the commitments, with a maximum of 8 and a minimum of zero for individual commitments. The SDG 6 targets with more frequent mentions were SDG 6.1 and 6.b, with 45% of mentions among all of the commitments. The targets with fewer mentions were SDG 6.2 and 6.5, with only 35% of mentions (Figure 1a).

As for the explicit involvement of Youth as beneficiaries and partners, a search for the keywords 'youth', 'youngster', 'juvenile', and 'young' was made, considering exclusively the use of the entire keyword and also an explicit and implicit search, considering a 0.9 match. In the first case, the search returned 46 commitments with youth as partners and 79 with youth as beneficiaries, representing 5.5% and 9.1% of the total list, respectively. For the second case, the search returned 211 commitments with youth as partners and 224 with youth as beneficiaries, representing 25% and 27% of the total list, respectively.

The involvement of vulnerable communities as beneficiaries was assessed using the keywords 'women', 'children', 'indigenous', 'tribal', 'traditional', 'poor', 'slums', 'vulnerable'

and 'poverty', again considering exclusively the use of the entire keyword and also an explicit and implicit search, considering a 0.9 match. In the first case, the number of commitments identified was 134, representing 16% of the total list. The group with the most mentions was women, with 8% of mentions, followed by children and indigenous, with 5% of mentions (Figure 1b). In the second case, 357 commitments were identified, representing 42% of the total number of actions.

Figure 1c and d show the geographic representation of the commitments, in terms of proponents and regions targeted, respectively. The USA is the country with the most f commitments, followed by Kenya and India. The region most targeted is Africa (23%), followed by Asia and Pacific (18%).

Finally, in terms of sector representation, the non-governmental organisations and governments are the sectors with the greatest number of propositions, representing 29% and 22% of the commitments, respectively (Figure 1e). It is also worth mentioning that all the commitments involve one or two sectors, with an average of 1.09.
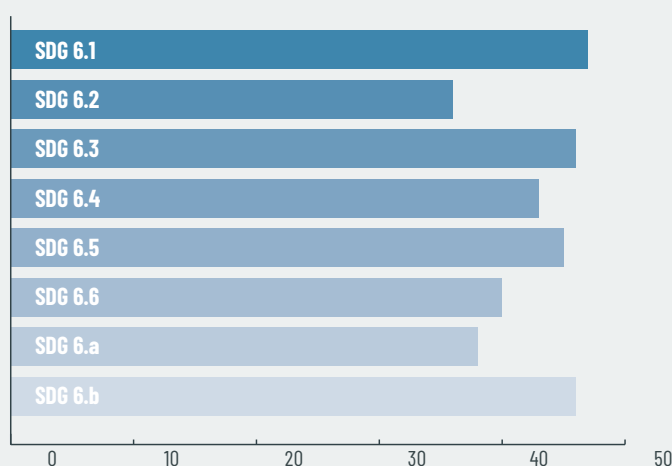

Impact on SDG 6

Figure 1.a

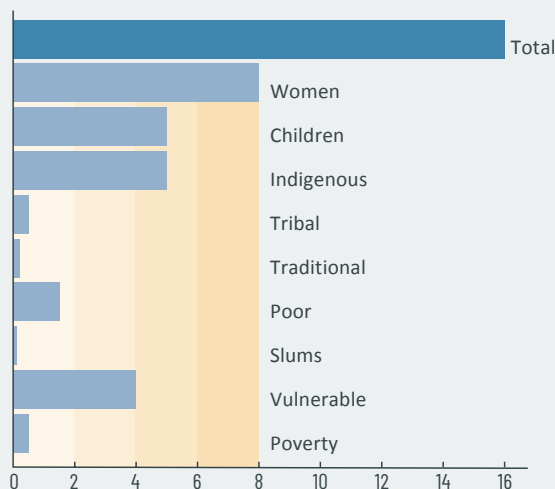**Vulnerable communities as benneficiaries**

Figure 1.b

Figure 1. Results of assessment of all commitments in terms of (a) impact on SDG6, (b) vulnerable communities
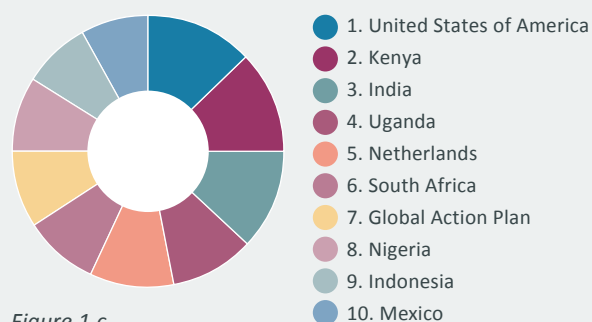
Geographical representation - 10 top proposants

- 1. United States of America
- 2. Kenya
- 3. India
- 4. Uganda
- 5. Netherlands
- 6. South Africa
- 7. Global Action Plan
- 8. Nigeria
- 9. Indonesia
- 10. Mexico

Figure 1.c

Sector representation - proposants

- 3% Regional government
- 6% Multilateral body
- 6% United Nations
- 2% Scientific community
- 9% Private sector
- 0% Philanthropic organisation
- 5% Partnership
- 3% Other relevant actor
- 29% Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- 3% Local
- 22% Government
- 5% Civil society organisation
- 7% Academic institution
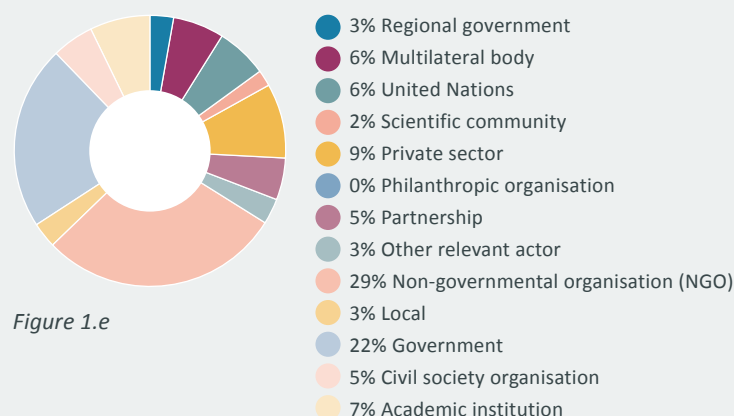
Figure 1.e

Geographical representation - target

- Africa
- Asia and Pacific
- Europe
- Global
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- North America
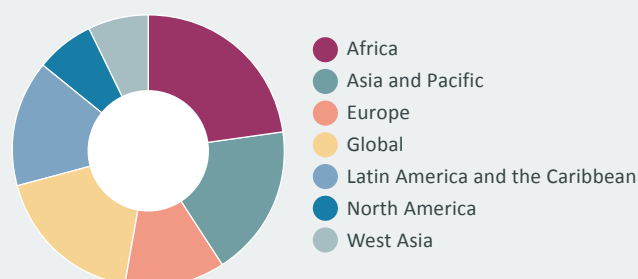- West Asia

Figure 1.d

Figure 1 (cont.). Results of assessment of all commitments in terms of (c) geographical representation for proponents, (d) geographical representation for targets, (e) sector representation

Initial feedback from interviews

The alpha testing phase of the Framework was crucial in drawing valuable insights from a diverse set of organisations. These preliminary feedback sessions were instrumental in helping to not only affirm the robustness of the framework in its current state, but also to identify areas for improvement. Each organisation's feedback highlighted unique perspectives and practical considerations, guiding us towards a more effective and inclusive tool. Below is a summary of the feedback received from the organisations that were engaged.

(i) International Secretariat for Water (ISW)

Commitment: Catalysing the Global Youth Movement for Water

KEY FEEDBACK:

- ISW emphasised the need to address the diversity within the youth demographic in the framework. It is crucial to ensure that the framework is inclusive of various youth perspectives and backgrounds.

- They suggested that the Fellows should present the framework to organisations within the World Youth Parliament for Water. This could help in garnering wider support and visibility for the framework.

- When disseminating results, they emphasised the importance of focusing on positive organisational practices, emphasising what they are doing right in terms of youth engagement.

(II) Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Commitment: Accelerating Women's Inclusion in Water

KEY FEEDBACK:

- ADB indicated that they are not yet ready to complete the survey tool as it required further consultation with relevant departments, such as the Gender team.

- The framework inspired ADB to think more broadly about youth engagement and explore ways to improve inclusion in general. There is interest in using the framework to influence their future strategies.

- ADB is developing its youth engagement strategy and plans to consult further with relevant bodies, such as the IWA-Young Water Professionals.

(III) UNICEF – Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)

Commitment: UNICEF's Game Plan to Accelerate Safely Managed Sanitation for All

KEY FEEDBACK:

• SWA found the framework interesting and showed strong interest in applying it within their work.

• They were keen on drawing synergies from the framework and exploring ways of integrating the framework into their existing Monitoring and Accountability Mechanism (MAM) framework, enhancing its relevance for their objectives.

(IV) AQUAFED – The International Federation of Private Water Operators

Commitment: Advancing Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Safely Managed Sanitation

KEY FEEDBACK:

• AquaFed stressed the importance of choosing the right partners from the beginning for successful implementation.

• They advised adopting a personalised approach when engaging organisations with the survey tool, recommending that a few select organisations, including AquaFed itself, be approached first.

• There is a need to focus the framework on youth themselves, and address the lack of coordination among youth organisations.

• AquaFed also suggested that fellows should reflect on their experiences during international exposure and high-level discussions, highlighting a need for young people to hold themselves accountable before holding others accountable.

• As a follow-up, AquaFed is willing to take the assessment with assistance from the Fellows, and invites other organisations to do the same. They also want Fellows to share their learnings from high-level engagements in a follow-up meeting.

(V) H2O4ALL

Commitment: Synergy for Water Now

KEY FEEDBACK:

• H2O4ALL scored highly across all seven pillars of accountability in the framework, indicating strong alignment with its goals.

• Tim Muttoo, Co-founder and CTO of H2O4ALL, noted: "The framework has been refreshing to use, and we are looking forward to continuing its use. The tool is fostering intentionality and sparking discussions around youth engagement and accountability."

(VI) Ghana Water Limited (GWL)

Commitment: Increasing Access to Safe Water for 1,000,000 Residents in Low-Income Urban Communities, Schools, Health Facilities, and Public Places in Ghana by 2030

KEY FEEDBACK:

• While GWL is progressing well, having fostered partnerships that support innovative financing for social connections to the utility, there are still financial challenges and a need for collaboration with public regulators.

• GWL highlighted that youth involvement is essential for advocacy and building partnerships.

• Regarding the tool, it was suggested that it should be clarified whether it is intended to evaluate only the specific commitment or the entire organisation. If it covers the latter, a formal letter should be sent to the managing director of the organisation to ensure proper engagement.

Workshop outcomes

The workshop held at the World Water Congress and Exhibition (WWCE) in Toronto, Canada on 15 August 2024 proved to be a pivotal moment in fostering youth engagement and accountability within the water sector. The workshop, attended by about 50 participants, yielded significant insights that will shape the future of youth engagement in the WAA. The key outcomes of the workshop are discussed below.

(i) Positive reception of the Youth Accountability Framework: Participants appreciated the structured approach of the framework, which provides clear guidance on how organisations could better involve youth in their commitments to the WAA. The feedback indicated that the framework successfully addressed the accountability gap within the commitments, specifically regarding youth engagement.

(ii) Refining the definition of 'Youth': During roundtable discussions, participants highlighted the varying definitions of youth across organisations. While some define youth based on age (e.g. 15–24 years), others consider years of experience. The workshop encouraged adopting a more inclusive and progressive definition of youth to ensure broader participation, such as individuals who have less than 5 years of professional experience on the sector. The workshop revealed a range of perspectives on youth engagement across different sectors. Some organisations viewed youth as valuable, cost-effective resources, while others saw challenges in integrating young voices, particularly on decision-making panels. This underscores the need for more mentorship and structured inclusion opportunities to balance youth perspectives with experienced professionals.

Youth Fellows and Henk Ovink after their Workshop at the 2024 IWA World Water Congress in Toronto, Canada.

the importance of the Youth Accountability Framework in promoting greater responsibility among commitment-holders.

(v) Action-oriented workshop: Participants provided specific, actionable feedback to enhance the Youth Accountability Framework. For example, GWL emphasised the need for personalised engagement strategies and a clear distinction between evaluating commitments versus overall organisational accountability. This feedback will be instrumental in refining the framework for broader application.

(iii) Emphasis on the Seven Pillars of Accountability: A key outcome of the workshop was the deep dive into the Seven Pillars of Youth Accountability: Responsibility, Answerability, Trust, Transparency, Learning & Continuous Improvement, Knowledge Sharing, and Authority & Power. These pillars were well-received, with feedback pointing to the need for clearer metrics and quantifiable evaluations to measure progress on each pillar effectively. There was constructive feedback on improving the metrics for assessing the accountability pillars. Specifically, participants called for the Framework to have clearer quantitative measurements, especially in areas like knowledge sharing and responsibility. Suggestions included a deeper focus on who is receiving knowledge and how effectively it is being communicated. The project team has noted these recommendations for future iteration of the Framework.

(iv) Increased awareness of accountability gaps: Through presentations and discussions, it became evident that youth involvement in the WAA commitments was lower than expected: only 25% of commitments included youth as partners, and 27% as beneficiaries. This finding reinforced

(vi) Emotional resonance and call to action: Speakers like Henk Ovink (Global Commission for the Economics of Water, Government of Netherlands) and Elisabeth Nahimana (ESAWAS, Rwanda) underscored the importance of youth engagement not just as a technical solution but as an emotional and cultural shift. They stressed the need for perseverance and long-term commitment, reinforcing that while results may take time, they are crucial for system-wide change.

(vii) Collaborative dialogue: The workshop created a platform for open dialogue between youth stakeholders and commitment-bearers. This resulted in constructive exchanges on how the framework can be tailored to fit the specific needs of different organisations, emphasising the role of collaboration in achieving sustainable outcomes for SDG 6. The workshop encouraged youth participants to not only expect accountability from organisations but also to hold themselves accountable for engaging meaningfully. Discussions highlighted that youth must take ownership of their roles, actively seek out opportunities, and push for greater involvement in decision-making processes.

6. **Recommendations and Next Steps**

Following the workshop outcomes and the pilot phase of the Youth Accountability Framework, the Fellows recommend the steps outlined below.

(i) Publication and global dissemination with IWA support: To enhance the reach and impact of the Youth Accountability Framework, a formal publication of the tool should be developed with the support of the IWA. IWA's global platform can help ensure the tool is widely disseminated across its networks, including governments, NGOs, academic institutions and private sector stakeholders. This will increase awareness and encourage more organisations to adopt and implement the Framework as part of their commitment to the WAA and, more broadly, as an organisational strategy.

(ii) Enhancing metrics for the Framework: Feedback indicated that the current metrics and indicators need to be more robust and quantitative. Future iterations of the Framework should incorporate clearer indicators for measuring the depth and effectiveness of youth engagement. The project team has noted these recommendations for future iteration of the Framework.

(iii) Expand pilot testing and gather feedback: Pilot testing of the Framework should continue with a wider set of organisations (indication of at least 5%). Collect detailed feedback from the participating organisations, focusing on the challenges and successes of implementing the Framework, particularly in contexts where youth engagement is minimal. As several organisations have committed to piloting the Framework, the next step should focus on scaling these pilots and integrating lessons learned into broader initiatives. This will involve providing technical support, resources and guidance to ensure successful implementation and scalability across regions and sectors.

(iv) Institutionalising youth voices: While youth participation has been growing, their voices are not yet institutionalised in decision-making processes. There should be concerted efforts to formalise the inclusion of youth in high-level forums, panels and decision-making bodies. The Global Youth Movement for Water is paving the way for this, and more organisations should ensure that youth participants are part of decision-making or formal governance bodies.

(v) Develop long-term support structures: Support mechanisms should be created for organisations that want to improve their youth engagement strategies. This could involve offering technical assistance, resources and capacity-building workshops to guide organisations through the process.

(vi) Build networks and leverage partnerships: Participants should be encouraged to continue leveraging their networks and creating safe spaces for youth to collaborate with experienced professionals. This will foster mutual learning and ensure that the benefits of youth engagement extend beyond individual projects.

The Fellows have agreed that as a group, they will continue to work together to address these recommendations. This will elevate the Youth Accountability Framework to become a more effective tool in holding commitment-bearers accountable for youth engagement in the Water Action Agenda, ultimately contributing to the success of SDG6.

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8. **Acknowledgements**

This publication was a joint development by the International Water Association (IWA) and Grundfos. IWA firstly wants to thank Grundfos for their conceptualisation, endorsement, and support of the Youth Action for SDG 6 Fellowship. This publication is the result of all the work carried out by the first cohort, and IWA express its gratitude to all of the Fellows who gave their time to make this project a success.

This publication would not have been possible without the involvement and contributions of Isabela Espindola and Samuela Guida, from IWA HQ Secretariat, whose commitment to excellence significantly enhanced the quality of this publication.

We would also like to thank all the people and organisations, who contributed to the development of this work and its publication, including Vikki Harley (Care 4 Free) and Vivian Langmaack (Ovo Design), who respectively proofread and designed this publication.

Finally, we wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to all those who, while not explicitly named in the text, have made valuable contributions to this publication. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

Above: IWA-Grundfos Youth Action for SDG 6 Fellowship Graduation at the 2024 IWA World Water Congress in Toronto, Canada

Below: Participants of the 2024 Emerging Water Leaders Forum in Toronto, Canada

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1. **Project Participants**

The ten (10) Youth Fellows and three (3) Fellow Advisors (who 'graduated' as alumni of the Fellowship as of December 2023) are shown in Table 2.

Name	Designation and Organisation	Country	Role in the Fellowship (Dec 2023–Aug 2024)
Marina Batalini de Macedo	*Assistant Professor, Federal University of Itajuba*	Brazil	Youth Fellow
Farokh Iaqa Kakar	*Environmental Engineer, Brown and Caldwell*	Canada	Youth Fellow
Pabel Cervantes-Avilés	*Assistant Professor, Tecnologico de Monterrey*	Mexico	Fellow Advisor
Muhammad Anique Azam	*PhD Scholar and Lecturer, NED University of Engineering & Technology*	Pakistan	Youth Fellow
Krisztian Mark Balla	*Technology Development Engineer, Grundfos Holding A/S*	Denmark	Youth Fellow
Chelsea Hayward	*Senior Process Engineer, Jacobs*	Australia	Youth Fellow
Charles Shachinda	*Technical Officer – International, British Water*	United Kingdom	Youth Fellow
Sudipti Arora	*Research Scientist, Dr. B. Lal Institute of Biotechnology*	India	Fellow Advisor
Yang Villa	*Consultant, Asian Development Bank*	Philippines	Youth Fellow
Jacob Amengor	*Water Quality Analyst, Ghana Water Limited*	Ghana	Youth Fellow
Hadi Toure Guindo	*Water Engineer, AFR'EAU*	Mali	Youth Fellow
Krithika Iyer Shivakumar	*Senior Manager, Sustainability and External Relations Grundfos India*	India	Youth Fellow
Inês Breda	*Senior Manager of Global Partnerships and Alliances, Grundfos*	Denmark	Fellow Advisor and Grundfos representative

Task and Milestone Output	March		April					May				June			
	18–22	25–29	1–5	8–12	15–19	22–26	29–M.3	6–10	13–17	20–24	27–31	3–7	10–14	17–21	24–28
PRE-ANALYSIS															
1) Environmental scan	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	London										
2) Analytical tools	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	London										
ANALYTICAL WORK															
3) Rapid assessment					London	Programmed	Programmed								
4) Desktop application					London	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed			
FEEDBACK															
5) Targeted testing					London	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed
6) WWCE workshop					London	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed
REPORTING															
7) Drafting and submission					London										

Task and Milestone Output	July					August				Sept.	
	1–5	8–12	15–19	22–26	29–A.2	5–9	12–16	19–23	22–30	2–6	9–13
PRE-ANALYSIS											
1) Environmental scan							World Water Congress				
2) Analytical tools							World Water Congress				
ANALYTICAL WORK											
3) Rapid assessment							World Water Congress				
4) Desktop application							World Water Congress				
FEEDBACK											
5) Targeted testing	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	World Water Congress				
6) WWCE workshop	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	World Water Congress				
REPORTING											
7) Drafting and submission							World Water Congress	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed	Programmed

Legend:

- Programmed activities
- London meetings and workshops
- World Water Congress Toronto

Appendix 3. **Final assessment rubric**

For the structured review of the commitments of the WAA, it was necessary to define the assessment rubric and the scale of evaluation. Regarding the assessment rubric, the following question was discussed during a group session "What is important for us to evaluate and that will help us to decide on a sub-group of actions to develop an accountability framework?" To answer this question, the following points were highlighted: (i) the importance of evaluating the impact that the commitments have on achieving the SDG targets, (ii) the involvement of youth as beneficiaries and partners, since the focus of the accountability framework is on youth engagement, (iii) the involvement of vulnerable communities, since we were also aiming at transformative commitments, (iv) geographical representation, so the actions are not aiming only at the Global North (v) sector representation, and (vi) how well structured the commitment is in terms of financial viability and continuous monitoring.

Additionally, determining a scale of evaluation is also important to allow comparison between the different commitments, after they are assessed. To achieve this, we have provided a normalised scale, ranging from 0 to 1, according to the number of components evaluated. With this scale, all of the assessment rubrics present the same weight in the final evaluation. Different weights can be later attributed to each one of the rubrics, if the group wants to compare the commitments within different perspectives.

The complete list of the assessment rubrics and their scale of evaluation is presented in Table A2.1

Table A2.1. Assessment rubrics and scale of evaluation for structured review of WAA commitments

Assessment rubric	Scale of evaluation			
Impact on SDG 6 targets	Number of impacts (x)	No Impact		
Value of the scale	*x/ Total number*	*0*		
Explicit involvement of youth as beneficiaries	Mention of youth and similar	No mention		
Value of the scale	*1*	*0*		
Explicit involvement of Youth as partners	Mention of youth and similar	No mention		
Value of the scale	*1*	*0*		
Explicit involvement of vulnerable communities (minorities) as beneficiaries or partners	Mention of vulnerable communities	No mention		
Value of the scale	*1*	*0*		
Built-in accountability and monitoring mechanism	Yes and clear	No mention or unclear		
Value of the scale	*1*	*0*		
Geographic representation (proposal/submitting)	< 2 countries	2–5 countries	5–10 countries	> 10 countries or Global
Value of the scale	*0.25*	*0.5*	*0.75*	*1*
Geographic representation (target/impact)	1 region	2 regions	> 3 or Global	
Value of the scale	*0.33*	*0.66*	*1*	
Sector's representation	Unisectorial	Multisectorial (2 sectors)		
Value of the scale	*0.5*	*1*		
Financial viability	Clear and sustainable funding	Unclear		
Value of the scale	*3/3*	*0*		

Appendix 4. Final accountability framework

Accountability pillars and definition, in the context of the Water Action Agenda	Accountability Level			Recommended indicators to support the Accountability Level
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	
1) Responsibility Accepting your obligation to engage with youth in realising the Commitment	We have not explicitly accepted the duty of engaging the youth in realising the Commitment.	We explicitly accept the duty of engaging youth, but we have not yet done so in the course of fulfilling the Commitment.	We explicitly accept the duty of engaging youth, and we have demonstrated the same in the course of fulfilling the Com-mitment.	1.1 Number of youth engaged with clear role in the Commitment 1.2. Budget utilisation rate for activities that involve youth stakeholders
2) Answerability Providing explanations to youth stakeholders for actions related to the Commitment	We do not provide explanations to youth stakeholders for our decisions or actions related to the Commitment.	We provide some explanations, but these are unclear to youth stakeholders or they are not satisfied with the explana-tions. We provide an opportunity for youth to voice their concerns, but in response no/limited ac-tions are taken.	We provide clear and satisfactory explanations to youth stakeholders for our decisions or actions in the course of fulfilling the Commitment. We proactively seek and address youth feedback and concerns.	2.1. Number of methods for youth to communicate their concerns 2.2 Success rate of addressing youth concerns
3) Trust Confidence in the reliability and integrity of the organisation to fulfil its Commitment and con-duct its actions in an appropri-ate, effective and ethical manner	Youth stakeholders have little trust or confidence in our organisation in terms of meeting our obligations and/or fulfilling the Commitment.	Youth stakeholders trust our organisation to some extent, but they are wary of potential lapse/s in our judgement or action.	We have a high level of trust and confidence among youth stakeholders in exercising our duty and fulfilling the Commitment.	3.1 Trust rating among youth 3.2 Retention rate of youth staff and/or partners
4) Transparency Accessibility and clarity of information for youth stakeholders	Youth stakeholders have little to no access to information in terms of meeting our obligations and/or fulfilling the Commitment. The information available to youth stakeholders is not clear in terms of language (e.g. readability), format and/or content.	Youth stakeholders have access to readily-available information. The information available to youth stakeholders is in somewhat clear language (e.g. readability), format and/or content.	Youth stakeholders have access to readily-available information. We respond to their request for additional information in a timely manner. The information available and provided to youth stakeholders is in clear language (e.g. read-ability), format and content.	4.1 Number of methods for youth to access information 4.2 Rate of response to information requests from youth
5) Learning and continuous improvement Feedback loop resulting from lessons learned and feedback	We do not have an impact as-sessment (IA) or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. We do not actively seek feed-back or learning to inform how we can pivot in the course of fulfilling our Commitment.	We have an IA and/or M&E system, but it is not consistently followed or applied. Our IA/M&E system somewhat includes assessing the consequences of our activities, decisions and actions on youth stakeholders. We take action based on lessons learned from the IA/M&E, but we do not always consider the feedback of youth stakeholders.	We consistently implement a robust impact assessment system that includes assessing the consequences of our activities, decisions and actions on youth stakeholders. We take action based on lessons learned from the IA/M&E, including feedback of youth stakeholders.	5.1 Number of continuous improvement initiatives 5.2 Youth feedback utilisation rate
6) Knowledge sharing The organisation's contribution to the public body of knowledge	We do not share our knowledge and learnings to key stakeholders.	We share our knowledge and learnings to some stakeholders, and we also learn from these knowledge exchanges, but we do not proactively engage youth stakeholders in these knowledge sharing activities.	We share our knowledge and learnings to key stakeholders, including youth, and we also learn from these knowledge exchange activities.	6.1 Number of knowledge sharing/exchange initiatives that include youth stakeholders
7) Checks and balances Delimitations on the use of authority and power in the course of fulfilling the Commitment	We are not aware of the potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power that our organisation may raise in the course of fulfilling our Commitment.	We are aware of the potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power that our organisation may raise in the course of fulfilling our Commitment. We do not yet have in place a system of checks and balances to avoid these risks from materialising, or a system for holding ourselves accountable in case these risks materialise. When youth call us out on any instance of conflict of interest and/or abuse of power, we sometimes act on these calls in a timely manner.	We are aware of the potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power that our organisation may raise in the course of fulfilling our Commitment. We have in place a system of checks and balances to avoid these risks from materialising. In case these risks materialise, we have a system for holding ourselves accountable and ensuring that these do not happen again. When youth call us out on any instance of conflict of interest and/or abuse of power, we always act on these calls in a timely manner.	7.1 Number of formal mechanisms for checks and balances 7.2 Turnaround time to address youth feedback specific to the use of authority and power

Appendix 5. **Rapid assessment scenarios and shortlists**

Table A4.1. List of the assessment scenarios and the shortlist of ten commitments with higher rates per scenario

ID	TITLE OF COMMITMENT	LEAD ORGANISATION	DESKTOP RESEARCH
Scenario A - Youth are explicit involved in the Commitment			
51358	Educate one million young-sters on water annually until 2030 – together.	*Wavemakers United Foundation*	
50691	Catalysing the Global Youth Move-ment for Water	*International Secretariat for Water*	Yes
50289	Youths' Water Resource Capacity Ex-pansion Activities and Future Projec-tions in the Face of the Planet's Triple Crisis	*UNISC International*	
51493	Water Education and Engagement (WE2): Co-Creating the Future of Wa-ter Education and Engagement	*WE2*	
50103	Palestinian Women Water Network	*Palestinian Hydrology Group*	
50317	Implementation of the Water and Cli-mate Youth Development Plan and Agenda (YDPA)	*United International Federation of Youth for Water and Climate*	Yes
50778	Water Action Agenda for a Sustaina-ble Tabasco 2023–2030	*Re-Action 2030. Innovation Hub of SDGs in México*	Yes
50710	Permaculture Literacy Project	*Dale Cyril Dejecacion*	
50504	Private Water Operators, federated in AquaFed, will advance the implemen-tation of the human rights to safe drinking water and safely managed sanitation in all its dimensions through two specific programmes	*AquaFed – The International Federa-tion of Private Water Operators*	Yes
50660	Investments for Future Water Managers	*North American Youth Parliament for Water – Canada*	Yes

Scenario B – Youth are not explicit involved in the Commitment			
ID	**TITLE OF COMMITMENT**	**LEAD ORGANISATION**	**DESKTOP RESEARCH**
50514	Ecological transformation is in our hands. It happens now and together.	*Veolia Environment*	
50326	Accelerating Women's Inclusion in Water	*Asian Development Bank*	Yes
50480	Financial support for Capacity Build-ing and sustainable resource manage-ment / Access to safe water and sanita-tion for all	*World Association for Solidarity and Tolerance /Organisation internationale de solidarite, d'amitie et de tolerance*	
50576	Synergy for water now	*H2O4ALL*	
50674	Renewing Water Governance to local-ise SDG 6	*United Cities and Local Govern-ments/Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments*	
51621	Cooperation Fund for Water and Sani-tation (Fondo de Cooperación para Agua y Saneamiento)	*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo*	
50550	Capacity Building in Groundwater Education	*The Groundwater Project*	
50013	Promoting more dialogues between SDG6 & SDG14 to accelerate the 2030 Agenda by encouraging interna-tional, intergenerational and cross-sectoral cooperation among organisations that place the Water and the Ocean at the centre of their research and business.	*Acqua Mater*	
50850	Implementation approaches of the Wa-ter for Women Fund Extension to scale up, out and deep	*GHD Australia Pty Ltd / DFAT*	Yes
50186	L'EAU C'EST LA VIE: Redonner la sourire aux personnes en situation dif-ficile et contribuer au bien-être pour tous.	*Rural Urban Partnership For Africa (RUPFA)*	

Scenario C – Vulnerable communities are explicitly mentioned in the Commitment			
ID	TITLE OF COMMITMENT	LEAD ORGANISATION	DESKTOP RESEARCH
50117	Increasing access to safe water for 1,000,000 residents in low-income urban communities, schools, health facilities and public places in Ghana, through innovative financing and in-clusion by 2030.	*Ghana Water Company Limited*	Yes
50619	Protecting spring water through a re-forestation programme on riverbanks to fight against erosion and intoxica-tion of Lake Tanganyika in Burundi	*Agir pour la solidarite et le develop-pement durable/ Acting for Solidarity and Sustainable Development*	
50541	ISŌKO (Water Source)	*ISHAKA 2250*	
50690	UNICEF's Game Plan to Accelerate Safely Managed Sanitation for All	*UNICEF*	Yes
49748	Raising Global Voices for Designing Social Protection Program as access to drinking water is a fundamental right of the people	*Bangladesh Social Scientists Founda-tion (BSSF)*	
50700	WASH FIT Initiative 2030	*Edge Outreach, Inc. - dba WaterStep*	
50777	Improving access to WASH services in health facilities for rural areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and refugee settlements in Thailand	*Malteser International (MI), in its ca-pacity as the relief and development organisation of the Sovereign Order of Malta*	
50924	Support to UNICEF for Acceleration to Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA) phase III	*The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs*	
50349	Enhancing water use efficiency through transversality systemic ap-proach	*India Water Foundation*	
50459	Storytelling and Human-centered Curriculum Design for SDGs: Advancing Grassroots Collab-orations Through Water and Climate Education	*Jo Bacallo, Founder of SEEDS: Schools for Environment Education, Development and Sustainability*	

Scenario D – Financial viability is well defined in the Commitment			
ID	**TITLE OF COMMITMENT**	**LEAD ORGANISATION**	**DESKTOP RESEARCH**
50349	Enhancing water use efficiency through transversality systemic ap-proach	*India Water Foundation*	Yes
51152	Achieving Just Water Action	*Voices for Just Climate Action*	
50317	Implementation of the Water and Cli-mate Youth Development Plan and Agenda (YDPA)	*United International Federation of Youth for Water and Climate*	
50289	Youths' Water Resource Capacity Ex-pansion Activities and Future Projec-tions in the Face of the Planet's Triple Crisis	*UNISC International*	
48639	Children as agents of change – an in-tervention in Kerala (India) on WASH in Schools	*Dr Roy Kunjappy*	Yes
50691	Catalysing the Global Youth Move-ment for Water	*International Secretariat for Water*	
51098	To enhance local capacity for infor-mation exchange, evidence-based ad-vocacy in the fields of water, water and sanitation hygiene, public health, economics and environmental health	*Africa Alliance for Health, Research, and Economic Development (AAHRED)*	
50729	A Global Commitment to Stop the Flow of Lead in Drinking Water	*The Water Institute at the University of North Carolina*	Yes
50716	Launching and Strengthening Parlia-mentary Water Caucuses	*Parliamentary Water Caucuses Part-nership*	
50848	Southern African transboundary sus-tainable biodiversity and water re-sources management programme in the Incomati Basin 2023–2025	*Water Research Commission, Inko-mati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency, University of Mpumalanga*	

Appendix 6. **Organisations and interviewees engaged**

Table A5.1. List of commitments evaluated in the alpha testing phase

ID	Title of commitment	Lead organisation	Contact person
50691	Catalysing the Global Youth Movement for Water	*International Secretar-iat for Water*	Elysa Vaillancourt
50326	Accelerating Women's Inclusion in Water	*Asian Development Bank*	Satoshi Ishii Neeta Pokhrel Allison Woodruff Tanya Huizer Yang Villa
50690	UNICEF's Game Plan to Accelerate Safely Managed Sanitation for All	*Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)*	Muyatwa Sitali Mariana Dias Simpson
50504	Private Water Operators, federated in AquaFed, will advance the implementation of the human rights to safe drinking water and safely managed sanitation in all its dimensions through two specific programmes	*AquaFed - The International Federation of Private Water Operators*	Neil Dhot
50576	Synergy for water now	*H2O4ALL*	Timothy Muttoo
50117	Increasing access to safe water for 1,000,000 residents in low-income urban communities, schools, health facilities and public places in Ghana, through innovative financing and inclusion by 2030	*Ghana Water Compa-ny Limited*	Faustina Boachie

Appendix 7. **WWCE workshop proposal**

Workshop Title	**An accountability framework proposal for realistic youth engagement in SDG 6**
Workshop outcome	• Launch the YouthAction4SDG6 Accountability Framework • Raise awareness on the importance of accountability for responsible action on youth-centered initiatives
Session Chair	**Yang Villa**
Session Co-Chair	**Chelsea Hayward**
Session Description	In this session, we will launch and present the YouthAction4SDG6 Accountability Framework to support organisations to start or elevate their youth engagement, particularly through their Water Action Agenda commitments. The session will address social bias toward youth, and include a presentation of the accountability framework, case studies and discussions around the ap-plicability of the framework with the participants. Following a high-level panel with interactive discussion, the session will end with a call for action on effec-tive youth engagement and inclusion in accelerating progress towards achieving SDG6.
Learning Outcomes for participants	• The pivotal role of youth in accelerating water action • Recognise the inherent cognitive bias toward youth • Share the pillars and indicators of the accountability framework proposed • Application of the youth-centered accountability framework/tool
Format	Panel discussion Roundtables discussion World Cafe Other. Which? _____

Outline	*3 min* Session welcome and overview of fellowship (Chelsea)
	3 min Welcome by Tom M.
	10 min Kick-off: Youth bias activity (Farokh)
	Mentimeter bringing to light inherent cognitive bias toward youth
	E.g., What do you think when you think about youth/seniors?
	(collect live data and then show results from Thesaurus)
	15 min Round table discussion sharing experiences with youth engagement in participants organisations (Farokh)
	10 min Background and overview of accountability framework and case study (Marina)
	15 min Round table discussion on accountability framework, including sharing any feedback / suggestions for improvement (Pabel)
	30 min Panel discussion (Yang)
	    • **Henk Ovnik**, *Executive Director, Global Commission on the Economics of Water*
	    • **Elisabeth Nahimana**, *Research Knowledge Management Specialist, ESAWAS*
	    • **Jacob Amengor** on behalf of **Ing. Michael Botse-Baidoo**, *Chief Manager Corporate Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ghana Water Limited*
	5 min Recap and Closing Remarks (Ines)

Presenters	Moderators: IWA-Grundfos Fellows
	Panelists:
	    • **Henk Ovnik**, *Executive Director, Global Commission on the Economics of Water*
	    • **Elisabeth Nahimana**, *Research Knowledge Management Specialist, ESAWAS*
	    • **Jacob Amengor** on behalf of **Ing. Michael Botse-Baidoo**, *Chief Manager Corporate Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ghana Water Limited*

Preferred Room Layout	Theatre Style Roundtables Other. Which? _____
Preferred Supporting Materials	Charts Permanent markers

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