

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Safe Water Initiative focuses on system-strengthening and service delivery to ensure professional, sustainable, affordable and safely managed water to 1 million people in low-income households, health facilities and schools in sub-Saharan Africa. The Safe Water Initiative contributes to building local capacity, narrowing gaps between those living in disadvantage and others, and generating evidence to inform regional, national and global actors—with the end goal of improved health and socioeconomic outcomes for all.

## Ideal state

Every person, health facility and school in the world uses professional, sustainable, affordable and safe water services. Safe water drives improved health and economic outcomes for all, with narrowing gaps between those living in disadvantage and others, and the Hilton Foundation's locally driven, systems-strengthening model is being replicated globally.

## History and background

The Foundation began our work in water in 1990 to help eradicate Guinea worm in Ghana. In 2002, we created the West Africa Water Initiative, a coalition across Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Niger. In 2006, the Foundation began work in Ethiopia and India to increase access to basic water services for high-need areas. We also supported a watershed management program in Mexico.

In 2011, the Foundation launched Phase I of the Safe Water Initiative, which contributed to increased access to basic water services for nearly 2 million people. We learned that improving water quality at the point of use and making service delivery professional, sustainable and affordable would require more attention to governance, incentives and other technical assistance. Infrastructure support alone, like drilling boreholes or laying out pipes, is insufficient.

Phase II, launched in 2017, responded to those lessons. We emphasized systems change and tested service delivery models with the potential for replication and scale in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda. The Foundation's 2017-2020 Safe Water Strategy sought to demonstrate systematic ways

of providing a sustainable and safe water supply to multiple countries, including fragile contexts. During the four-year timeframe, the Foundation's work contributed to 595,000 people, 40 schools and 149 health care facilities gaining access to at least basic water services. Phase II achievements also include establishing 10 district-based partnerships with accompanying government-owned plans for water services and identifying promising professional service delivery models like safe water enterprises to deliver quality water services.

Strategy25 (2021-2025) continues to invest in safely managed water services for those most in need and is described in this brief. The Foundation remains committed to working with national, regional and local government leadership, other donors, civil society, the private sector and communities to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.1, which calls for universal access to safe water, beginning with securing safely managed water services<sup>1</sup> in its target geographies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda over the next five years. To achieve this goal, our grantmaking approach is guided by the thematic areas described here.

## Five-year goals

250k

new people in our focal districts have safely managed water

250k

new people in our focal districts have safe water at the point of use

500k

new people in districts where partners are working are being reached through replication by government and international partners

60%

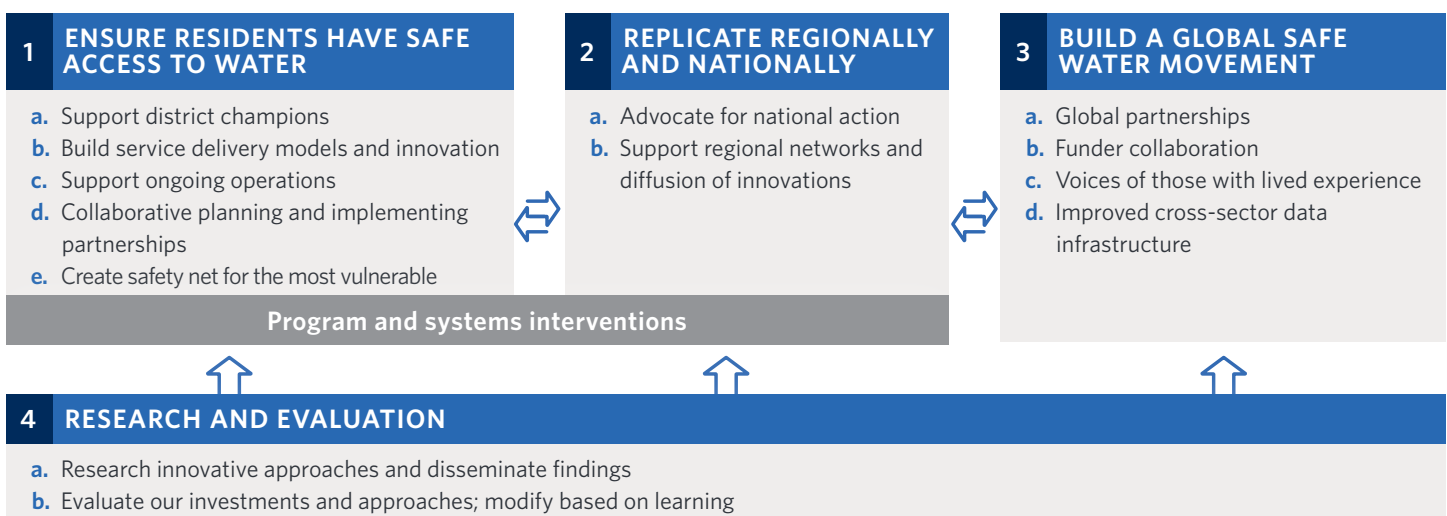
of health care facilities have safely managed water in our focal districts (~65-70 facilities)

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national governments have designed and are implementing plans to strengthen water systems

1. Safely managed water: water that is: a) located on premises; b) available when needed; and c) free from contamination, consistent with SDG 6 criteria.

## Strategy architecture



## WHERE WE WORK



## EQUITY FOCUS

- “Last-mile” households
- Low-income households
- Women and girls
- Children, at birth and in schools
- Build the capacity of local organizations to serve their communities

## OTHER KEY METRICS

- Test and implement performance-based subsidy mechanisms that allow operators to reach the hardest-to-serve 10 percent of residents with safe water
- Increase the percentage of residents with safely managed water (from 3.6 percent in 2017 to 30 percent safely managed water services by 2030 in our focal districts in Ghana)
- Introduce innovative financing mechanisms to scale and sustain professional, affordable and climate-resilient safe water service delivery models

### PROGRAM COSTS



**Phase I  
(2011-2016):**  
\$56,000,000

**Phase II  
(2017-2020):**  
\$54,226,000

**Strategy25  
(2021-2027):**  
Est. \$88,000,000

### CHALLENGES



- The target countries are resource constrained and face tough choices in funding competing priorities
- Taking a systems approach to achieve sustainable results takes time
- The political context, including reforms, conflicts and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on governments and overstretched economies could make regional and national efforts less viable

### OPPORTUNITIES



- The Foundation is uniquely positioned and timed to raise safe water’s profile as a public health necessity with potential for economic growth and promote safe water interventions as key in addressing challenges
- Increased partnerships with local organizations close to the people with lived experiences can broaden and strengthen partnerships within the local safe water systems to leverage resources, replicate innovative service delivery models and multiply impact