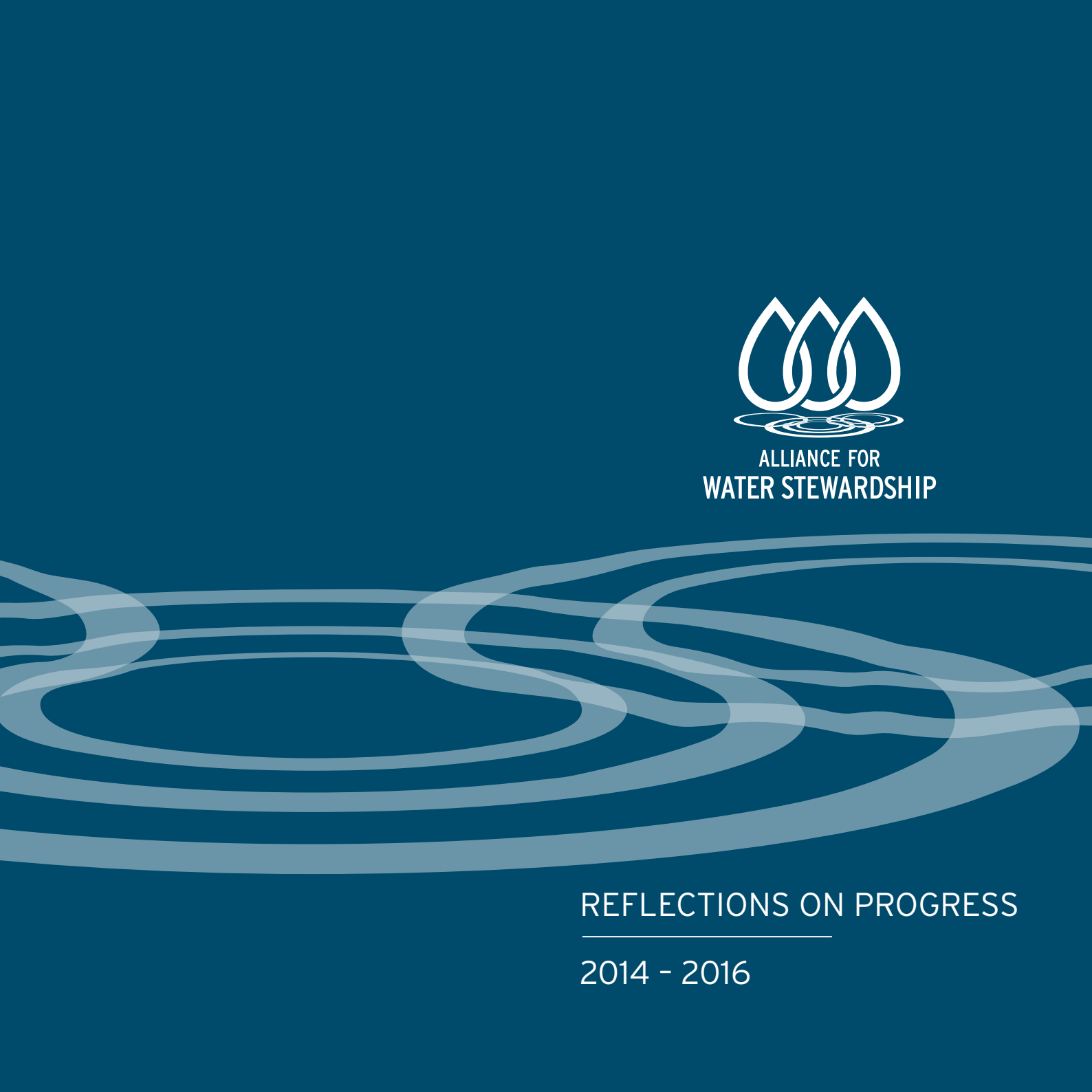

REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS

2014 - 2016

ALLIANCE FOR
WATER STEWARDSHIP

Our idea

We unite organizations behind our mission: To lead a global network that promotes responsible use of freshwater that is socially and economically beneficial and environmentally sustainable.

We achieve this through a global water stewardship system that connects and motivates leading organizations, and an internationally-endorsed standard that drives, recognizes and rewards good water stewardship performance.

The AWS Standard

The AWS Standard is a globally-applicable framework for major water users to understand their water use and impacts, and to work collaboratively and transparently for sustainable water management within a catchment context.

Developed through a four-year global multi-stakeholder process, the Standard supports implementing sites in understanding the local context and its shared water challenges, and to begin transparent and constructive engagement with other stakeholders. This globally-consistent approach helps sites develop contextually-appropriate actions in pursuit of four outcomes:

- Good water governance
- Sustainable water balance
- Good water quality status
- Healthy status of important water-related areas

Implementing the AWS standard helps sites to

- Understand their water use in the context of a catchment
- Build internal capacity through a step-wise learning framework
- Manage water risks at site level and through supply chains
- Engage effectively and build trust with local stakeholders
- Demonstrate real leadership in addressing water challenges

Driving continuous improvement

The AWS Standard drives continual improvement through three performance levels: core, gold and platinum. The AWS System includes third party certification and a network of accredited professional service providers who support and assess the implementation of the Standard.

Building trust for collaboration

The integrity of the multi-stakeholder processes through which it was developed enables the Standard to act as a neutral framework that drives transparency, builds trust and enhances understanding of shared water challenges. In doing so the Standard provides a "safe place" that is critical to enabling genuine and lasting collaboration.

A global initiative, driven by members

The Alliance for Water Stewardship is a global membership-based collaboration. Our members are drawn from all sectors: leading businesses, non-profits, public sector agencies and academic institutes.

By connecting organizations at the forefront of collaboration on water, AWS membership acts as a forum to exchange learning and advance the uptake of water stewardship worldwide. This knowledge helps our members to continually refine their own stewardship practices.

As owners of the AWS system, our members shape the development of AWS processes so as to be responsive to the learning generated and changing nature of water challenges.

By working together we are also able to support, and draw strength from, other water initiatives and other sustainability standards pursuing compatible objectives.

Connecting global-to-local and local-to-global

Water use is a local issue with primarily local impacts, and the AWS Standard aims to deliver genuine benefits for local stakeholders.

To achieve this, we are building a network of local and regional partners who engage local stakeholders and establish localized networks, expertise and data sets. These facilitate contextually-appropriate water stewardship actions within the globally-consistent framework of the AWS Standard.

Local partners play a key role in raising awareness, building water stewardship capacity, and supporting uptake of the AWS Standard. The work of local partners helps to establish the "local-to-global" learning pathways that are a critical part of the AWS approach, informing our governance and connecting multi-national organizations with local water expertise. AWS regional coordinators support the local-to-global approach as part of our international secretariat.

Supporting implementation of water stewardship

AWS-accredited specialist service providers are a key part of the capacity development program necessary to advance understanding and implementation of AWS water stewardship.

Working closely with our local partners, AWS-accredited organizations support organizations implementing the AWS Standard, and provide third party assessment of conformity with the Standard.

12 lessons learned

AWS has been at the forefront of efforts to engage different groups to advance water stewardship – an inherently collaborative approach to managing shared water resources.

Collaboration and sharing of knowledge is central to our ethos and is reflected in how we engage with local stakeholders through partnerships and networks. Enabling knowledge from local implementation to inform governance of our international water stewardship system is critical to the future evolution of water stewardship.

Our aim is to engage key organizations, further the collective understanding of water-related challenges, and facilitate genuine and meaningful collaboration for long-term sustainability. To advance this collective approach to learning and knowledge-sharing, this section offers 12 lessons we have learned since launching the AWS Standard in 2014.

1 AWS has helped to crystalize the concept of water stewardship

We define water stewardship as "*the use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site and catchment based actions*". Prior to AWS, there was no agreed upon definition of "water stewardship". While any given set of words may never be universally accepted, our definition does offer a generally agreed position of what water stewardship is, as evidenced by its reference in academic and grey literature. In addition, the AWS Standard offers a clear conceptualization of what water stewardship involves, while AWS certified sites are strong case studies of water stewardship, its outcomes and benefits.

2 The AWS standard is viable across various sectors and geographies

When the AWS Standard was first proposed our ambition was to develop a universal standard that could be operationalized across all sectors and geographies. During development a number of stakeholders were understandably sceptical of this position. Since launching the Standard in 2014 (and through previous pilot tests of the beta version) implementations have proven that the standard works in a range of contexts.

The standard has now been successfully applied in countries across four continents, and in radically different sectors and commercial settings, without losing any of its significance. Evidence from these implementations suggest strong validation as to the universal applicability of the AWS Standard.

3 Progress on water stewardship can be furthered through peer learning and support

Despite the global applicability of the AWS Standard, particular sectors have been more advanced in their adoption of water stewardship than others. This points to a commonality within sectors as to the type, scale and location of water-related risks faced. It would also serve as evidence of the importance of learning and the transparent sharing of knowledge, both of which are cornerstones of the AWS system and of the CEO Water Mandate. Beverage and food companies with agricultural supply chains have led and so can offer many insights for other organizations and sectors. Industry platforms can also be important partners in supporting member companies new to action on water beyond site boundaries along the stewardship journey.

4 AWS certification often has strong internal corporate culture benefits

Implementations in diverse settings across a range of sectors have demonstrated the value of the AWS Standard in translating global corporate commitments on water into locally meaningful action. The cases of AWS Standard implementation that have been followed by certification have also resulted in greater collaboration between a site and the corporate sustainability team. For the site, the fact that an independent external auditor will be involved, along with corporate scrutiny on a site, has driven action. For the sustainability team, the corporate commitment to achieve certification has opened up a greater degree of openness and collaboration with their colleagues at site level. This has been welcomed by sustainability teams that have at times struggled to make water a priority for sites.

5 Strong and diverse local networks are critical

Translating global corporate commitments on water into locally meaningful stewardship interventions through better engagement with data, water policy and law, public sector agencies, civil society and neighbouring water users has proven to be one of the core strengths of the AWS Standard. Factors such as access to robust data and sites knowing who to consult and collaborate with locally have shown themselves to be vital to the successful implementation of the Standard. A lesson for AWS in this process has been the importance of access to local expertise, datasets and support structures. This is why our regional partners are focused on developing local networks and training local stakeholders in the AWS Standard.

6 The AWS Standard v1.0 is a great start, but with room for improvement

Like any other technology, sustainability standards need to evolve to meet rapidly changing needs. We already know that the terminology in the AWS Standard can be improved upon to make it more relevant to smaller scale water users such as smallholder farmers. Similarly, there are several changes that could be made to make the Standard more accessible for farmers in corporate supply chains or for small and medium sized industrial enterprises. Learnings from implementations need to continue to support the development of guidance, and this should become more local and sector-specific. Developing such guidance requires "local-to-global" learning pathways and strong local partners and networks.

Another area where the AWS Standard will need to be strengthened is in relation to water-related SDG issues such as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Energy, Health, Food Security and Climate Change. The AWS Standard v.1.0 incorporates learning from across the development sector on these issues but AWS's continued engagement with global water initiatives, international NGOs and development platforms pursuing compatible objectives will be necessary in order to track and incorporate new learning as it emerges.

7 AWS member experiences catalyze the evolution of the AWS Standard

A pre-requisite to improvements to the AWS Standard is the input of members and implementing sites, critiquing and feeding back on its performance. Our initial members have been invaluable in this regard, providing valuable insights that are shaping the AWS system. Conversely our members state that they have found real benefit in being part of an organization from which they can both draw support and be involved in shaping the evolution of processes. The AWS Technical Committee represents the interests of members and will oversee the technical development of AWS, including the first review and revision of the AWS Standard through 2017 and 2018. Growing our member base will grow our evidence base which will ensure the AWS system continually evolves to be responsive to diverse needs.

8 Every case is different

While it might seem obvious, one key lesson we have learned (or perhaps one that has simply been re-emphasized) is that each location, each company, each site is unique. Even within a single corporation, every site will experience unique challenges, have different capacities and different individuals to deal with these challenges. While there are generic value propositions, in the ultimate analysis, how the Standard is applied and the actions it stimulates are site-specific – and this is how it should be. One of the great opportunities we have as members of AWS is to be able to communicate to peers facing their own water challenges how the globally-applicable AWS Standard can drive collaborative actions to address very specific local challenges.

9 Good water stewardship is not just about water – politics plays a critical role

It is clear that there are pressing water-related challenges in many parts of the world. Very few, if any, countries are positioned comfortably when it comes to water. As we have engaged with stakeholders in different parts of the world in the two and a half years since the Standard's launch, one thing has become very clear: in most cases the challenge is more political than hydrological. Neglecting the political element of water-related challenges is a good recipe for disappointing outcomes. There exist clear opportunities to effectively communicate the value of the AWS Standard in providing a safe place to begin conversations, ask the right questions and build trust.

10 Water stewards need to more closely engage with the public sector

With some notable exceptions, particularly in Australia, public sector agencies have been only peripherally involved in water stewardship implementation. As a result, much of the policy landscape and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) discussions have yet to be fully woven into either the water stewardship debate or water stewardship practice at field level. The role of water stewardship in supporting public policy is crucial and needs to be advanced through greater engagement with public sector agencies at national and local scales. In several locations, for example sub-Saharan Africa, AWS training programs have proven useful in engaging the public sector at national and catchment level, strengthening understanding of public sector roles in water stewardship. We need to build on this success to create templates for greater public sector engagement.

11 Clear catchment goals and the capacity to implement them are vital

Clearly defined catchment goals to which business can align their water stewardship practice can enable companies to adopt water stewardship more rapidly. Where these exist, businesses can quickly get a solid contextual understanding and develop the stewardship plans to align with these goals. They can also more easily engage with responsible public sector agencies. Conversely, where catchment goals are yet to be developed, or the public sector lacks the capacity to implement them, there exists an opportunity for water stewards to strengthen engagement on catchment goals.

12 The AWS Standard offers a pathway for private sector contributions to the SDGs

When the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it was made very clear that the private sector had a critical role in their achievement. The SDGs call for a fundamental shift in our relationship to water, and as the largest water user, the private sector should be front and centre in this effort. The AWS Standard has a significant role to play in engaging the private sector in the SDG agenda, most notably in regard to the 8 targets in SDG 6.

The ubiquitous nature of water means that the AWS Standard also touches each of the other 16 SDGs. The Standard can be a 'driver' for 18 targets in nine goals, can contribute to the achievement of 22 targets in nine goals and reinforce 15 targets in nine goals. Importantly, AWS can build the multi-stakeholder partnerships identified in Goal 17 that will be help achieve the overall SDG package. The AWS Standard provides a clear and independently verifiable route for businesses looking to ensure that their actions on water are aligned with the ambitions of the global development community.

Testimonials

On AWS membership

"For BASF international consistency in the language and understanding around water stewardship is important. AWS membership gives us the opportunity to be part of the future development of the AWS system, to integrate our experiences and to learn from others"

Dr. Brigitte Dittrich-Krämer,
Senior Sustainability Manager, BASF

"As a company headquartered in South Africa, water is a major input and significant risk to our business. It's only in collaborative efforts that we have any chance of managing this precious resource fairly and efficiently, and the Alliance for Water Stewardship is one of the key partners in helping us move towards achieving this"

Justin Smith,
Head of Sustainability, Woolworths

"At AWS, CPI will share its experiences and learn more about others experiences in the network and contribute better to facilitate Pakistani industries to adopt water stewardship"

Shafqat Ullah,
Cleaner Production Institute, Pakistan

"CARE USA became a member of the AWS as it is an innovative platform convening a much needed spectrum of stakeholders to promote a more responsible use of our world's limited freshwater resources"

Kemi Seesink,
Director of Development, Strategic Partnerships, CARE USA

"As the custodian of the only globally consistent standard for implementing water stewardship initiatives our membership of AWS shows businesses, governments, civil society and other important stakeholders that we are committed to principles of equity and transparency and a vision of stewardship that ensures water security for all, not just the few"

Dr. Nick Hepworth,
Director, Water Witness International

On AWS Standard implementation

"Implementing the AWS standard has definitely opened our eyes to the risks we face. Before the AWS Standard we weren't making best use of our resources, and this was risking productivity, impacts on the environment and big regulatory and reputational problems"

Jeremy Dufour,
Olam

"The AWS Standard identifies the importance of collective action and begins to clarify what responsible suppliers can do to drive better water management both within, and critically, beyond their fence-line."

Louise Nicholls,
Head of Responsible Sourcing at Marks & Spencer

"We had been struggling for years to address the issue of unit level water security which we knew was not possible without accounting for the interests of other stakeholders. AWS provided the framework and guidance to help us understand the issues involved and also develop our approach which has led to several projects being implemented across India"

Sanjib Bezbaroa,
Executive Vice President, Corporate EHS, ITC Ltd.

Five ways you can help to ensure responsible use of freshwater:

1. **Join AWS:**
   Become a member and help shape the future of water stewardship.

2. **Implement the AWS Standard:**
   Join a growing number of leading water users to commit to global best practice.

3. **Help others to use the AWS Standard:**
   Work with your supply chains, investments, clients or partners to advance uptake of the AWS Standard.

4. **Participate in a local network:**
   Take part in advancing water stewardship in your own country or region by joining one of our local networks.

5. **Fund our groundbreaking work:**
   With more resources we can accelerate the uptake and impact of water stewardship worldwide.

ALLIANCE FOR
WATER STEWARDSHIP

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