



Strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement and mutual accountability in water, sanitation and hygiene: Cross-country synthesis

**Prepared by UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures and SWA country partners
for Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)**

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Executive Summary

Background

This report synthesizes research findings on multi-stakeholder platforms and mutual accountability across five countries that received catalytic funds from Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) in 2022. The five countries were Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay. This synthesis report identifies common enabling factors that support effective multi-stakeholder collaboration, and common challenges that often inhibit this collaboration. The report also assesses current multi-stakeholder engagement and mutual accountability efforts in each country context, as well as demonstrating how such approaches can support progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). A separate report outlines specific activities conducted by civil society organizations using similar catalytic funding and describes their outcomes. [To read it, please follow this link.](#)

Research methods

In each country, research teams conducted qualitative research to examine multi-stakeholder engagement processes, identify possible benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement, enabling factors, challenges and progress towards achieving SDG 6. Country research took place from December 2021 to May 2022 and included a total of 54 participants. Methods varied from country to country. In Indonesia there was a six-person focus group, and more than 600 people took part in webinar discussions. In other countries the research was focused on semi-structured interviews (7 interviewees in Kenya, 15 in Nepal, 14 in Niger and 12 in Paraguay). There was also a three-day workshop on accountability in Niger.

Key findings

The research identified a wide range of **benefits** of multi-stakeholder engagement. The most common were [building social capital and relationships in the sector, mobilizing collective strengths and resources, and maximizing participation and consultation](#). Another benefit was [fostering common approaches and reducing duplication, as well as supporting collective identification of key sectoral priorities and challenges](#). These benefits strengthen the enabling environment for stakeholders to jointly contribute to progressing SDG 6.

Across the countries, three main concrete **results** from multi-stakeholder engagement were identified: [\(i\) multi-stakeholder inputs incorporated into laws and policies, \(ii\) accelerated access to water and sanitation services, and \(iii\) shared information systems to track progress](#). The first of these is particularly significant to note, as multi-stakeholder input into national laws and policies can have far-reaching, long-lasting influence on a country's sector.

An **assessment of multi-stakeholder engagement** in the five countries revealed ways in [which trust, power and valuing collaborative work](#) affected stakeholders' ability to work together and to create synergy towards collective goals. Variation in stakeholder perspectives on these dimensions demonstrated diversity of experiences and important areas where effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement can be improved. These are illustrated in the findings across different countries. In Indonesia, although there was active participation and trust, power differentials also affected stakeholder interactions and decision making. In Kenya, while there were mixed views about active participation, all stakeholders placed high value on working together to achieve goals. In Nepal, the research found that while there was participation, stakeholders did not work easily with one another due

to power differences, nor did they significantly value working collaboratively. In Niger, at national level engagement was functioning, challenges were faced in local level multi-stakeholder engagement. In Paraguay, low trust affected interactions and there was only mixed participation of different stakeholder groups.

The most common **enablers** that supported effective multi-stakeholder engagement were found to be shared vision and purpose, as well as clear collaborative processes and mechanisms for engagement. These have also been identified in previous SWA research (Willetts et al., 2020). Other key enablers were: leadership from government; voiced demand from civil society; active, well-networked constituency focal points; adequate resourcing; and linkages to multi-stakeholder engagement at sub-national levels. In some country contexts, external drivers such as COVID-19 and climate change were also identified as a driving force that helped bring stakeholders together.

Multiple **challenges** to effective multi-stakeholder engagement were raised across the five countries. Firstly, leadership and coordination challenges were raised. This included poor coordination across different national government agencies, and between national and sub-national stakeholders. It also highlighted government instability and corruption, and an ad hoc, unstructured approach to multi-stakeholder engagement as a leadership and coordination challenge. Secondly, the research identified three main practical challenges, including limited available resources to support multi-stakeholder engagement, and achieving consistent participation given staff rotations, as well as limited accessibility and availability of sectoral information. A final set of challenges concerned relationships and incentives to participate. These included power differentials, varied levels of influence and trust, limited participation/ missing stakeholder groups that were not well networked with key players, and lastly, organizations choosing to work alone and perceived competition between organizations.

Overall, the results for current **accountability and commitment-making** efforts were lower than scores given for multi-stakeholder engagement and participation, demonstrating the need for further work in this area. Knowledge of SWA was mixed in several countries, as was the diversity of stakeholder groups making commitments. In general, the opportunity for follow-up, to share and discuss progress on commitments was limited, and there were few incentives in place to support stakeholders to hold each another to account on those commitments. In Indonesia, an important finding was that stakeholders considered **SWA as 'neutral ground' which could level the playing field between large and small stakeholders**. It was felt that this could compel diverse stakeholders to join, providing a channel for articulating their aspirations – and therefore the potential to enhance accountability.

In all five countries, multi-stakeholder engagement was predominantly based around **multi-stakeholder platforms**, which serve as a basis for coordination and exchange. In some countries there were also specific multi-stakeholder processes, such as 'Joint Sector Reviews', which comprise another form of multi-stakeholder engagement. As previous research on other global partnerships has found (Willetts et al., 2020), when there is move from use of multi-stakeholder coordination **platforms** towards a more coherent sense of multi-stakeholder **partnership**, this is conducive to facilitating mutual accountability between stakeholders. Partnerships and platforms are differentiated by the degree of shared vision and goals among stakeholders, the clarity of mechanisms for engagement, and the degree of shared decision making, about how stakeholders interact with one another.

Country-level recommendations

Each country developed its own recommendations based on their findings. In summary:

- In **Indonesia** the emphasis was on leveraging SWA as a neutral platform to convene stakeholders, reduce sensitivities and to shift from coordination to mutual accountability, with agreement to 'proceduralize' a mutual accountability mechanism and decide how it should be organised, led and financed so that it would maintain independency and legitimacy.
- In **Kenya**, it was proposed to build sustainable and more inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement by bringing more national-level stakeholders on board and cascading the collaboration platforms to the sub-national level, to build trust among stakeholder groups before they can feel comfortable to hold each other to account, to increase the consistency and inclusivity of meetings and build government capacity to lead.
- In **Nepal**, recommendations included taking immediate action to activate multi-stakeholder platforms at national, provincial, district and municipal levels. An annual calendar of national engagement activities to hold government to account for delivery of important sectoral plans was also recommended, along with the development of a participatory multi-stakeholder monitoring mechanism for SDG 6 and ensuring the central management information system continues to be supported.
- In **Niger**, it was proposed to increase ownership of SDG targets, particularly by CSOs, to increase regularity and follow-up of meetings of the National Water and Sanitation Commission. Improving the State-CSO consultation framework was also recommended, as was seeking ways to build trust to facilitate honest critique, and increasing stakeholder engagement on international meetings and monitoring processes (for example, SWA's High-level Meetings, and gathering data for the Joint Monitoring Programme, etc.).
- In **Paraguay**, it was recommended to reactivate existing platforms, defining protocols for commitment making, decision making and accountability among members, to reactivate the donor roundtable, to strengthen sub-national government engagement. It was also recommended to disseminate results and benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation, to build the case for a broader range of stakeholders to increase their participation. In the medium term, it was also recommended to establish a formalized space for joint work between different stakeholder groups, with established protocols governing their activities and mutual obligations.

Conclusion and recommendations

This research provides further evidence of the need to continue strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement, confirming such engagement as the foundation for an environment that supports mutual accountability among stakeholders. Numerous benefits and results of multi-stakeholder engagement were identified, which provide the basis to make a strong case for investment in this area.

Across the five countries, multi-stakeholder engagement primarily took place in the form of coordination platforms. It was found that mutual accountability can be supported by: embedding a culture of partnership and a shared agenda; establishing clear, formalized collaborative mechanisms; and strengthening relationships and trust across different stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder views on accountability and commitment-making suggested the need for further work in this area. Knowledge of SWA was mixed in several countries, as was the diversity of stakeholder groups making commitments. In general, follow-up to share and discuss stakeholder progress was limited, and there were few incentives in place to support stakeholders to hold one another to account, such as 'naming and faming', which can generate a positive environment in which to discuss each actor's contribution and assess their performance.

Country-level recommendations are:

- Leverage **SWA as a neutral entity** to facilitate trustful relations and participation.
- **Formalize mechanisms** for multi-stakeholder engagement and mutual accountability.
- Increase diverse, free, and meaningful stakeholder **participation**.

At the global level recommendations are to:

- **Make the case to national governments** on the benefits of multi-stakeholder partnership among stakeholders to collectively address SDG 6 and realise the human rights to water and sanitation.
- **Increase funding** targeted at strengthening government-led multi-stakeholder partnerships and their effectiveness towards achieving universal access to services.
- **Strengthen a culture of mutual accountability for results** through multi-stakeholder engagement, ensuring that different stakeholder groups can engage fully, pushing against any closures of civic space.
- Increase opportunities for **cross-country exchange** and learning about effective multi-stakeholder engagement and **invest in action-research** processes to improve their effectiveness.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to synthesize findings across five countries that received catalytic funds from Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) to strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms and mutual accountability. These funds were provided to a combination of research and civil society organizations in five countries, namely Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay.

This synthesis specifically aims to identify common enabling factors that support effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and mutual accountability and key results to increase sector progress that can be achieved through such approaches.

Brief background on each of the country contexts and their involvement in SWA is provided in Box 1.

Box 1: WASH status and SWA participation in each country context

Indonesia: As of 2020, Indonesia reached 90.2% access to basic drinking water, 20.7% access to piped water, and 69.5% access of non-piped water. Access to basic sanitation in 2020 reached 79.53%. Indonesia has set targets in its National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020-2024 to achieve 100% access for basic drinking water and 90% access for basic sanitation, with an open defecation rate of zero. Indonesia joined SWA in 2017 and has been actively involved in SWA activities – for example hosting SWA's 2022 Sector Ministers' Meeting.

Kenya: In 2020, Kenya had 59% access to basic water services, and 30% had access to improved sanitation. Limitations in access to water is most acute in urban informal settlements and the arid and semi-arid lands. Kenya joined SWA in 2010 and adopted the Mutual Accountability Mechanism as a tool to raise awareness among stakeholders on the sector priorities and improve coordination in 2018. All constituencies, in a government-led process, have made commitments on the activities and targets they wish to achieve until 2024.

Nepal: In 2019, 97.1% of household members used drinking water from an improved water source. However, 85.1% of household members were at risk of E. coli contamination in their household drinking water. 93.80 % of the population of Nepal is living in households using improved sanitation facilities, with 79.2% of the household members reported using improved sanitation facilities that are not shared (NMICS, 2019). Nepal was declared Open Defecation Free in 2019. Nepal joined SWA in 2010. Since then, the country is working for strengthening multi-stakeholder processes and has made commitments under the Mutual Accountability Mechanism.

Niger: In 2021, the access rate to improved water sources in Niger was 64.5% and for sanitation, only 14.5% had access to basic sanitation services. Open defecation is practiced by 65.4% of the population. Niger joined SWA in 2010, declaring as priority actions: the drafting and implementation of a strategy to mobilize funding for the sector; the drafting of the national water policy in light of SDG 6; and the drafting of the national sanitation and hygiene policy.

Paraguay: In 2021, drinking water network coverage at the national level reached 88.2% of the population, with only 77% of the population verified in terms of water quality. Sewerage coverage is 15.04% of the total population, with sewerage treatment systems covering 7.5% of the population. Paraguay joined SWA in 2010, establishing as a priority to ensure that institutions have the necessary capacity and resources to perform the functions of leadership and regulation, as well as to generate decentralised capacities at the local government level to improve governance.

Research Approach

Research objectives

Three objectives guided this research:

1. To identify enabling factors required for multi-stakeholder collaboration that increase sector progress.
2. To investigate the status of current multi-stakeholder engagement and mutual accountability efforts and results to date.
3. To support critical reflection from research and learning institutions (R&Ls), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the SWA Secretariat and other SWA partners, including governments.

Methods

This report comprises a thematic synthesis of findings gathered by local research teams linked to research and learning institutions from across the five countries. Key areas of the investigation included:

- Assessment of multi-stakeholder engagement processes;
- Strengths and challenges of existing approaches; and
- Identification of enabling factors of effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and results achieved to progress SDG 6 through such engagement.

A common research framework was developed, including two conceptual frameworks (one for multi-stakeholder engagement and another for mutual accountability and its enabling environment) as well as common research tools, including a question guide comprising open-ended and scaled questions.

Country research took place from December 2021 to May 2022. The respective research methods utilized in each country were as follows, and included a total of 54 interview or focus group participants:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Indonesia | CRPG and Jejaring AMPL organized a series of five webinars to increase sector collaboration, enhance awareness about SWA and discuss Indonesia's commitments. There was a 'kick-off' webinar (100+ participants) and webinars targeted at CSOs (138 participants), research and learning institutions (293 participants), business and philanthropy (102 participants) and private sector actors (113 participants). A catalytic support group interview was also held with 6 participants from Jejaring AMPL (a member of the country's WASH network). There was also a validation workshop. Their report also drew on previous research, which comprised a literature review, online survey (16 respondents) and interviews (7 participants), social network analysis and a validation survey (25 participants). |
| Kenya | In total, seven interviews were held with representatives with long-standing (more than 10 years) experience in the sector: officers from government (2), civil society organizations (3), donor agencies (1) and research and learning institutions (1). |
| Nepal | In total 15 stakeholders were interviewed, including from government (3), CSOs (7), a research and learning institution (1), a media partner (1), and external support agencies (3). |
| Niger | In total 14 experienced stakeholders completed a survey, including government institutions (6), private institutions (2) and civil society organizations (6). Nine stakeholders were also interviewed, and a three-day accountability mechanism workshop was held. |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Paraguay | A total of 12 professionals were interviewed. They were from government (3), private sector (3), civil society organization (1), research and learning (2), donors and development community (2), and a development bank (1). |
|-----------------|---|

Two limitations of the research methods were: the relatively small sample sizes for interviews – particularly in Kenya; and that the perspectives given are based on the personal views and experiences of those interviewed, and therefore may not necessarily be representative.

Research Findings

Types of multi-stakeholder engagement arrangements

Multi-stakeholder engagement can take different forms, with different levels of purpose, mutual commitment, and mutual accountability (see Figure 1). In all five countries, multi-stakeholder engagement was predominantly based around multi-stakeholder coordination platforms, and showed some elements of multistakeholder partnerships. In some countries there were also specific multi-stakeholder processes.

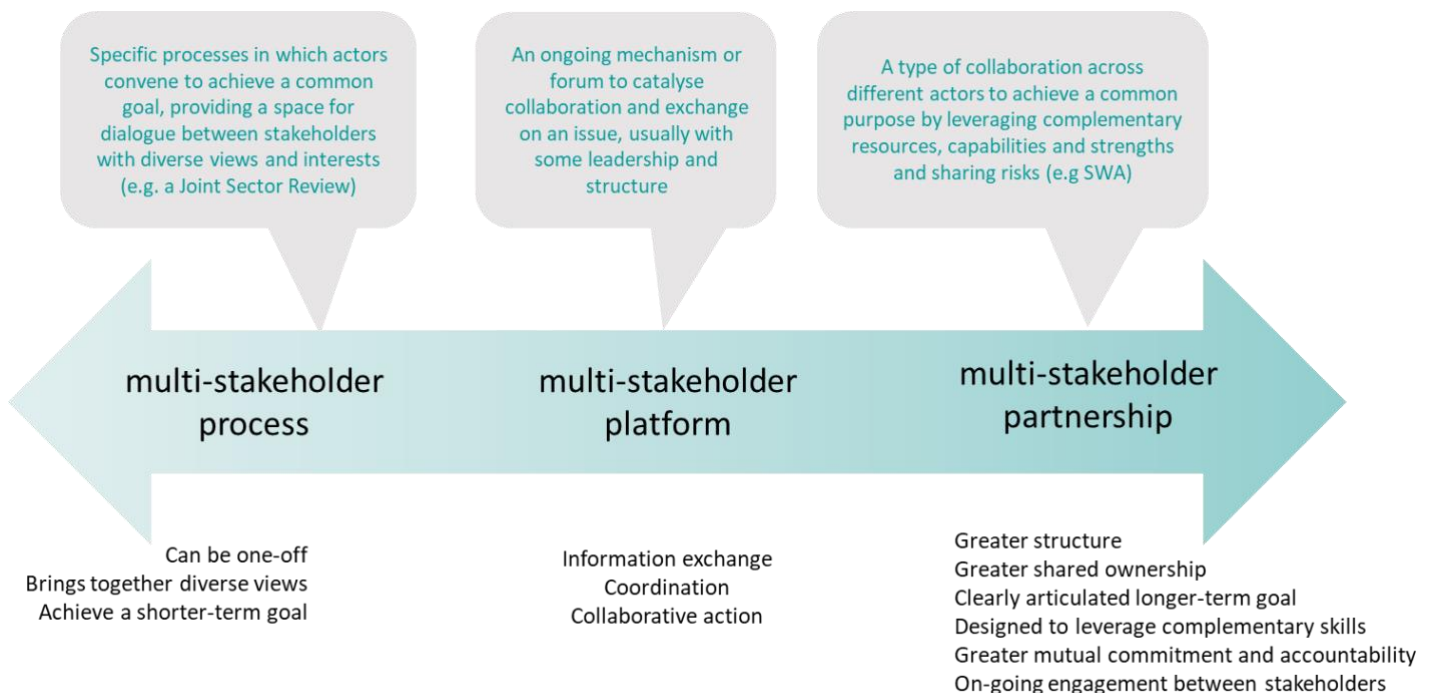


Figure 1: Types of multi-stakeholder engagement on a continuum from processes, platforms to partnerships¹

In **Indonesia**, the research found that two major ongoing **multi-stakeholder platforms** exist, however there is no formal multi-stakeholder partnership with shared goals or vision, or any dedicated forum to support mutual accountability between stakeholders. The two platforms are:

¹ Eweje, G., et al. (2020); Jansen, L. & Kalas, P. (2020); Kusters, K., et al. (2018); Mikheyev, A., (2005); Reid, S., Hayes, J., & Stibbe, D. (2014); and Stibbe, D. & Prescott, D. (2016).

- National Pokja AMPL (recently absorbed into Pokja PPAS Housing, Settlement, Water, and Sanitation Working Group). The platform is a government working group coordinating water programmes and policies between government agencies, to whose meetings other stakeholders may be invited and views may be voiced. However, decision-making remains with government members.
- Jejaring AMPL, which is a voluntary platform for coordination and networking that often participates in policymaking. Jejaring has an open membership for institutions and individuals, yet has close ties with the Government. There is no strict structure, and members mainly come from a CSO background and are passionate about WASH issues.

In **Kenya**, there have been varying levels of multi-stakeholder engagement during the past decade, with some **multi-stakeholder platforms** inactive, and most recently a platform for engagement with SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism established. There are also various one-off **multi-stakeholder processes** such as workshops and events, but there is not yet a **multi-stakeholder partnership** with shared goals, vision, structure, and mutual accountability.

- The Ministry of Health spearheaded an active Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) and its Technical Working Groups (TWG), which brought WASH sector stakeholders together, but has since gone dormant, as it was not embedded strongly within the ministry's structures – although the research suggested there had been recent efforts to revive the committee.
- The Ministry of Water also coordinated the Joint Sector Working Group for the water sub-sector, which also went into dormancy after a few years.
- The WASH stakeholders' platform on SWA's Mutual Accountability Mechanism is an all-inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement platform currently active in the sector, but with an uncertain future due to lack of certainty over funding.

In **Nepal**, there is an established structure of **multi-stakeholder platforms** in the WASH sector, comprising a multi-level coordination committee, a national coordination mechanism for sanitation and hygiene, and various civil society networks. There is **no multi-stakeholder partnership** with shared goals, vision, structure and mutual accountability.

- The Coordination Committee (CC) works at the national, provincial, district and municipal levels. During the Open Defecation Free campaign which ran until 2019, there was a strong sense of shared vision and goals, and these committees were active, but they have been less active more recently, with meetings becoming irregular and participation numbers reduced.
- At the national level, there is one coordination mechanism, the National Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee (NSHCC), which is currently active coordinating WASH stakeholders as and when required.
- There are also various civil society networks, such as Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) and Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN), as well as coordination around the South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) and related commitments.

In **Niger**, several **multi-stakeholder platforms** exist, however not all are active:

- National Water and Sanitation Commission (CNEA) established in 2006 serves as a consultative body for all stakeholders on water and sanitation policy. It also contributes to the harmonization of

sector projects, approaches, and information exchange. However, none of the usual bi-annual meetings have been held recently.

- The Cadre de Concertation Etat-PTFs (Consultation Framework for Government and Development partners) brings together the government ministries and the technical and financial partners involved in the sector.
- The Cadre de Concertation Etat-PTFs Etat-ONG (Consultation Framework for Government and NGOs), under the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, has several purposes: (i) providing a framework for dialogue on implementation modalities, (ii) supporting coordination of the achievements of NGOs, (iii) enabling joint programming, monitoring and evaluation, (iv) facilitating the application of a programme approach and (v) organizing a joint annual review of the sector.

The joint annual review of the WASH sector is itself a **multi-stakeholder process**, which brings together stakeholders (at municipal, regional and national levels) to discuss and to analyze achievements and constraints faced by the sector.

In **Paraguay** there is **no formalized multi-stakeholder partnership** that brings together WASH actors under established structures and protocols to guide joint work. However, there are **multi-stakeholder processes** where civil society or donors participate and provide input to specific plans and projects, or where stakeholders engage with one another in relation to a specific funded project. Several **multi-stakeholder platforms** also exist for coordination and information exchange. These include:

- The Mesa Intersectorial del Agua para el Chaco (MIA-CHACO). The Chaco is a semi-arid region of the country, and the platform engages civil society institutions, government ministries and agencies and development cooperation agencies.
- A government-led donor roundtable to promote coordination (currently inactive).
- The Inter-Institutional Coordination Committee for the Drinking Water and Sanitation (CICOSAPS). This platform coordinates the multiple public sector institutions involved in the sector at national level, but does not include sub-national governments responsible for services, and sometimes holds specific meetings with civil society institutions, academia, development cooperation agencies, among others.
- The Citizen Observatory for Water. This is a civil society initiative using multi-stakeholder processes, and comprises a coalition of ten civil society associations, with a specific focus on WASH.

Benefits and results of multi-stakeholder engagement

Benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement

Research showed that, in each country, multi-stakeholder engagement had provided various benefits for the sector, which strengthen the enabling environment for progress on SDG 6. These benefits are described below.

| Benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement | Countries where benefit mentioned |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Building social capital and relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating space for different stakeholders to meet and interact - Building 'social capital' and informal dynamics | Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal |

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helping stakeholders to open up about their work and to understand each other in terms of their capacities, knowledge and experience, and interests - Providing a network hub | |
| <p>Facilitating learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging peer-to-peer learning - Fostering development of learning hubs | Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal |
| <p>Mobilizing collective strengths and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling pooling of resources to tackle some common challenges, mobilizing popular support, and fostering ownership of projects, decisions, etc. - Leveraging and mobilizing resources by creating synergy and effectiveness - Supporting team efforts with different thematic experts - Promoting joint-funded programmes across different donors and government | Kenya, Nepal, Paraguay |
| <p>Identifying priorities and addressing gaps and challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying bottlenecks and gaps in WASH service provision - Exploring challenges and opportunities, and finding solutions to overcome those challenges - Setting priorities - Supporting joint use of WASH bottleneck analysis | Nepal, Paraguay |
| <p>Promoting information exchange and sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing information and consultation during policy and decision making, and the implementation of interventions - Sharing progress, learning, knowledge, responsibility, and accountability - Facilitating joint supervision, monitoring, and evaluation | Kenya, Nepal, Niger |
| <p>Maximizing participation and consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring participation, increased contribution of skills and knowledge on various issues, and creating stakeholder empowerment - Increasing collaboration and providing a mechanism for input during national strategy and policy development, joint sector reviews and times of crisis - Increasing visibility of all contributors | Indonesia, Kenya, Niger |
| <p>Equalizing power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling a more balanced power relationship between stakeholders, thereby contributing to improved governance | Indonesia, Kenya |
| <p>Fostering common approaches, terminology and reducing duplication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting common planning and reporting - Creating uniformity in implementation modality - Reducing duplication of programme and resources in same locations - Encouraging elaboration of consistent sectoral nomenclature | Nepal, Paraguay |
| <p>Increasing efficiency and optimization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting optimum use of resources, coordination and collaboration for better results - Improving the WASH sector's efficiency to achieve national targets, as well as international commitments | Nepal, Niger |

Box 2: A future vision for multi-stakeholder engagement in Kenya

For multi-stakeholder engagement to be sustained, participating organizations must perceive a benefit to their organization. This sense of benefit also affects their interest to increase their participation in the future. In Paraguay and Niger there was greatest perceived benefit, and this was associated with higher interest to increase participation. Slightly lower results were found in Kenya and Nepal (see Figure 2). In Nepal, although interviewees articulated many different theoretical benefits, they also noted that multi-stakeholder platforms were not seen to be actively functioning and providing benefits, in practice. In Kenya, stakeholders articulated their vision for the future of multi-stakeholder engagement (see Box 2).



Interviewees in Kenya showed an interest to build stronger multi-stakeholder platforms, partnerships and processes to jointly address the issues and challenges in the sector. Interviewee visions included:

“A platform that is out to serve Kenyans, making sure the country is at a better place than now in terms of the interventions, that is giving in an accountable, transparent and open way where stakeholders can also share information” –

“First of all, multistakeholder engagement must be all inclusive, it must be institutionalized and have strong leadership. It must deliberate relevant issues that people want to learn from, every member must be heard. Promoting multistakeholder engagement also needs to be considered a performance indicator for the heads of anchor departments in government ministries”. – CSO

“Stakeholders who are engaging very well, who are deliberating on issues and priorities in the sector diplomatically and with mutual respect” – Government

“At the most basic version, we need the annual report and conference to start again as a forum for all stakeholders to come together, take stock of the situation, and determine a path forward for the following year. I’d also like to see a sector financing and coordination plan fully owned and led by government that stakeholders can support and see themselves in”. – Donor agency

“This vision can be achieved if we embrace the Mutual Accountability Mechanism led by government, and continue having joint reviews with partners, and institutionalise and invest in the quarterly forums at two levels of governance – sub-national and National”. – Government

Results of multi-stakeholder engagement

Three main 'results' were identified as products of effective past or current multi-stakeholder engagement. These included (i) multi-stakeholder inputs to laws and policies, (ii) an overall increase in progress in access to water and sanitation services and (iii) the development of shared information systems.

Laws and policies formulated with inputs from different stakeholders:

- In Indonesia, the civil society network Jejaring AMPL and academic institutions such as CPRG contributed their perspectives to the House of Representatives and the Government during the drafting of the country's Water Law² and the drafting of a Ministry of Health regulation (2018-2019), with their perspectives influencing the final version of these laws and regulations.
- In Nepal, multi-stakeholder engagement supported an improvement of WASH in schools and health facilities, and the formulation of standard operating procedures and agreed standards.
- In Paraguay, the Government has increased space for civil society partners to contribute to public policies, resulting in their participation in updating the National Drinking Water and Sanitation Plan (PNAPS), along with contributions from academia and other stakeholders.

Increased progress in Open Defecation Free (ODF) status and WASH access:

- In Nepal, the collaboration of multiple stakeholders resulted in significant, rapid progress on sanitation and declaration as an Open Defecation Free country, on 30 September 2019.
- In Niger, with the implementation of the national water and sanitation programme 'PROSEHA' and other multi-stakeholder contributions, there has been a net improvement in water service access in urban and semi-urban areas (the access rate has increased from 44.2% in 2015 to 64.5% in 2021) and a decrease in the open defecation rate (from 71% in 2018 down to 65% in 2021).
- In Paraguay, increased involvement of civil society organizations has made poor access to WASH services in vulnerable communities more visible, and there has been an increase in budget execution in the sector, as well as in the number of projects presented to congress.

Development of shared management information systems:

- In Nepal, the Ministry of Water Supply has prepared a common Management Information System (MIS) to manage WASH data, with support and input from civil society organizations (see Figure 3). The system increases transparency, accountability, the ability to review progress against targets, and improves clarity on WASH status. As of 2022, more than half of the 753 municipalities had added their data to the system.

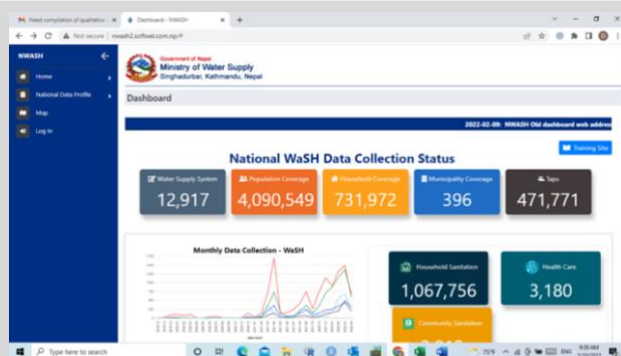


Figure 3: Dashboard from Nepal's management information system (Source: <http://nwash2.softwel.com.np/#>)

² 'Input from Ampl Network to People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia Regarding Water Resources Bill' (Position Paper). Available [here](#). Accessed 19 June 2022. See also (in Bahasa Indonesia): 'RUU Sumber Daya Air perlu Dikaji Ulang, Ini Rekomendasinya Halaman all', *KOMPAS.com* [online], 22 September 2018. Available [here](#). [Accessed 3 August 2022].

Assessment of current multi-stakeholder engagement

Comparing country assessments

An overall assessment of current multi-stakeholder engagement in the five countries is shown in Figure 4.³ Across all areas, participants from Niger self-assessed their engagement to be the highest against almost all categories as compared to other countries, whereas Paraguay generally self-assessed lowest. In Indonesia and Kenya, results from different respondents were highly variable.

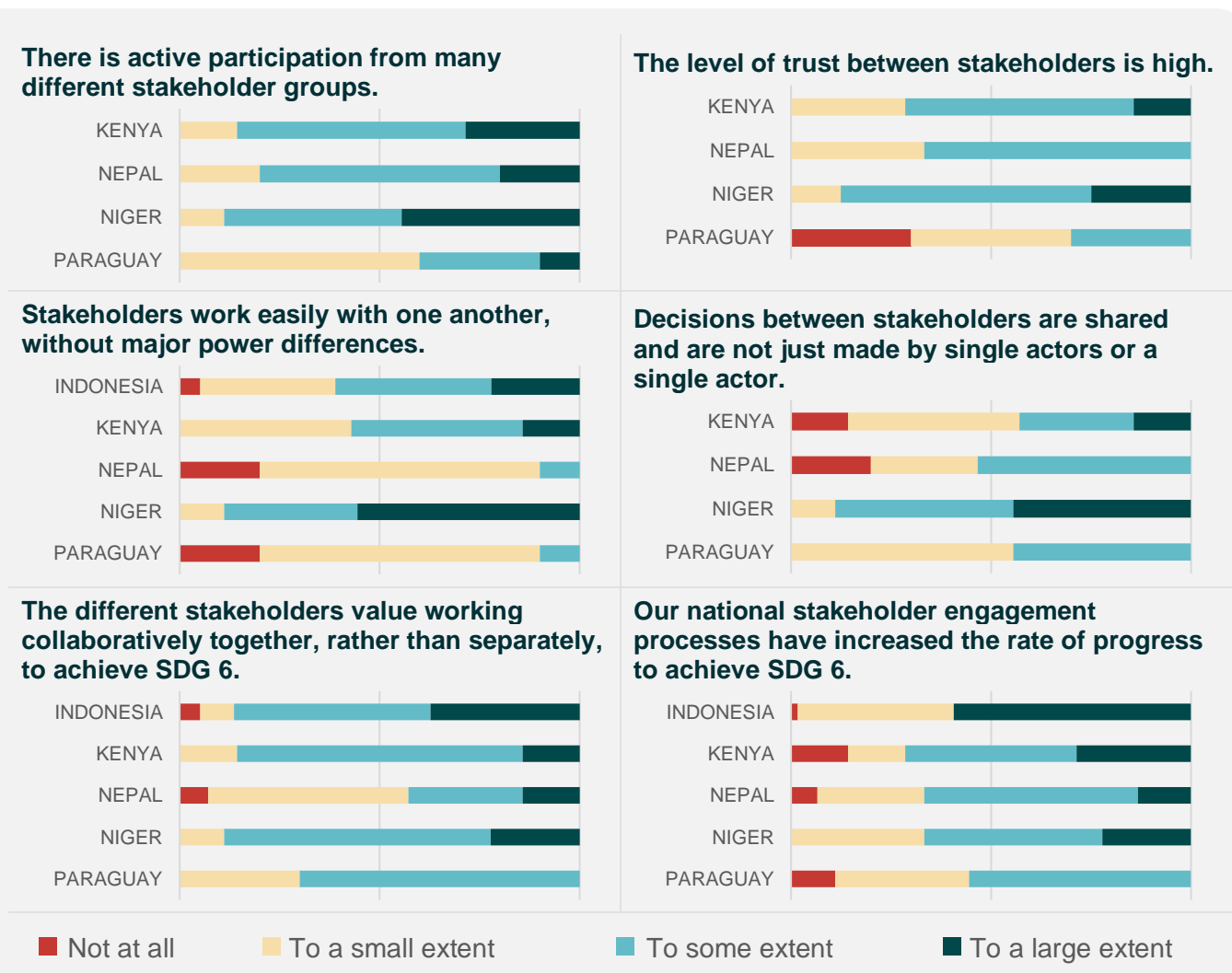


Figure 4. Statements concerning multi-stakeholder engagement at national level: assessment across countries

In **Indonesia**, the quantitative results suggest that although there was active participation and trust, power differences appeared to play a significant role in stakeholder interactions. This was confirmed in interviews, where some research participants considered power differences to be substantial when engaging with the Government. There were mixed results as to whether participants felt there were also power differentials between CSOs, with some perceiving such differences, and others not. In addition, through the activities organized by Jejaring AMPL and CPRG, SWA was perceived as a neutralizing

³ Please note, for Indonesia, only three of the six questions were conducted during webinar, hence omission in first two graphs.

force that helped 'level the playing field', enabling different organizations to feel they could contribute. On whether decision-making is shared, although the overall response was 'to some extent', one group interview suggested that in fact most stakeholders felt that "...decisions are made by the Government", with a sense that other actors are not always able to influence such decisions.

In **Kenya**, views varied as to whether there is active participation of different stakeholder groups and concerning the level of trust and power differences between stakeholders. For example, while one CSO proposed that: "...trust is a very difficult to measure but...during discussions I think stakeholders, to a large extent, are very frank with each other", another CSO respondent noted that: "There will always be power differences and imbalance, even between government ministries...They will say: 'we are one government and need to work together', but we all know too well underneath lies a lot of power plays."

That said, all stakeholders placed high value on working together to achieve goals. There were also differences of views concerning the extent to which government consulted on their decisions. One CSO suggested that government made decisions unilaterally, without consultation, and another suggested there was consultation on some decisions, but not others. There were also mixed perceptions on whether stakeholder engagement had increased progress on SDG 6. One CSO respondent reported that multi-stakeholder engagement influenced government representatives to take their work more seriously: "Finding that other actors are serious and they're doing their role, the Government is feeling obliged to do the same."

In **Nepal**, while generally interviewees felt there was active participation to some or a large extent, they were less certain with regards to the level of trust, and most felt that stakeholders did not work easily with one another due to power differentials. It was also suggested that stakeholders did not significantly value working collaboratively, though most agreed that stakeholder engagement processes had to some extent increased SDG progress.

In **Niger**, local actors (village and municipal level) had a different view to other interviewed stakeholders, and they felt that active participation and trust was low and power differences affected ability to work easily among stakeholders. However, the other national government, civil society and private sector interviewees' views contrasted strongly with this, with most scoring active participation, trust and ease of working across power differentials highly. These results reflect the current make-up of the forum and platform. Further details of multi-stakeholder platforms and approaches to strengthen them are shown in Box 3.

In **Paraguay**, interviewees from the public, private, civil society and development bank sectors rated the level of trust between stakeholders as low, perceiving that stakeholders work easily with each other only in isolated cases and that there are still many obstacles to maintaining a smooth and efficient flow of work. The research and donor sectors presented a slightly more optimistic view in this respect, recognizing, however, the difficulties that hinder a good level of trust and smooth working between stakeholders. Overall, interviewees from Paraguay scored the ability to work easily between stakeholders with power differences as only happening to a small extent, and lower than other countries. Overall, it was noted that there is currently some synergy between government, civil society organizations, the donor community and, to a lesser extent, research and academia.

Box 3: Multi-stakeholder platforms and their strengthening in Niger

In Niger, many platforms have been developed to strengthen collaboration across stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society, NGOs, donors, private sector and the media, and this can support greater accountability in the sector. However, some of these platforms are not working well – for example, where there is activity, it is erratic, which is weakening cooperation between actors. With more resources, more interest can be mobilized to make sure that they function well. Proposed steps to strengthen multi-stakeholder processes in Niger included:

- **Joint Sector Review:** enhance the communication strategy of the sector review to report on the progress of government targets
- **The National Water and Sanitation Commission:** increase the regularity of sessions, and publicise and follow up on the recommendations
- **The State/PTFs consultation framework:** engage more with civil society organizations, and be more open to such constructive engagement
- **The Forum with the Communities:** enhance the representativeness of the Forum with the Communities and formalize the engagement framework to add value to this forum
- **International mechanisms applied in Niger:** popularize the outcomes of international and regional meetings in order to ensure greater accountability

[Adapted from country report]

Assessment by different stakeholder groups

Looking at the views of different stakeholder groups across four countries (excluding Indonesia where data was not disaggregated by stakeholder group), different stakeholders tended to have similar views about active participation, but divergent views on trust (with private sector perceiving higher trust than researchers) (see Figure 5). There were also divergent views about the extent to which stakeholders worked easily across power differentials, with CSOs more optimistic than other groups.

Different stakeholder views about current multi-stakeholder engagement across all countries

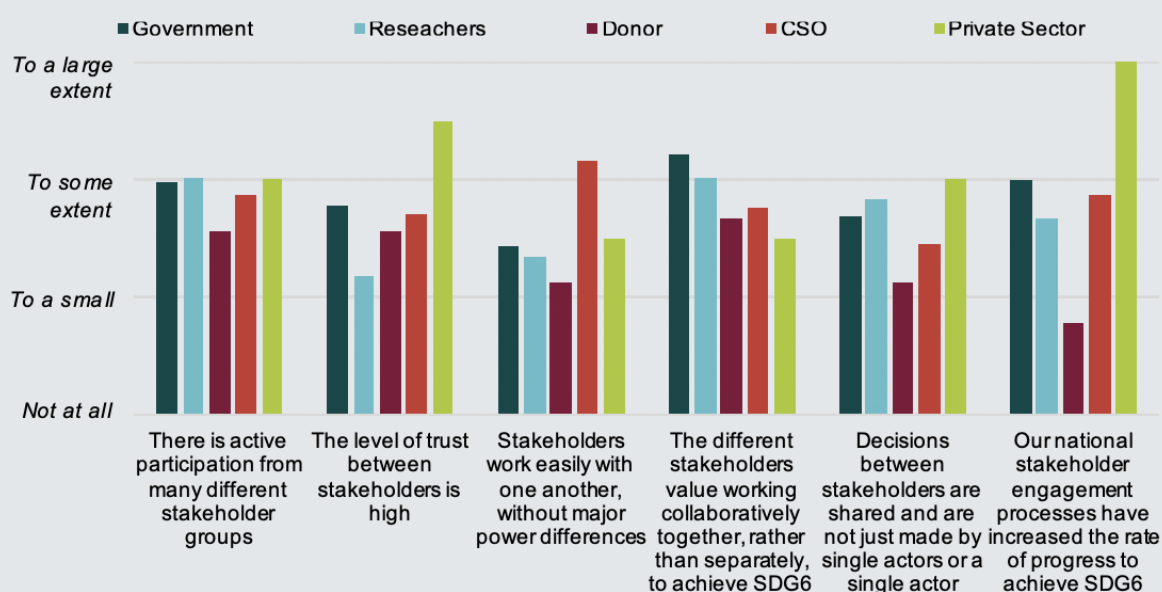


Figure 5. Statements concerning multi-stakeholder engagement at national level: views of different stakeholder groups

Government representatives and researchers placed the highest value on stakeholders working collaboratively together. Donors were relatively pessimistic in terms of the extent to which multi-stakeholder engagement had increased sector progress across different countries.

Enablers of effective multi-stakeholder engagement

Identifying enablers of effective multi-stakeholder engagement is key to understanding how to strengthen such engagement. Previous research showed that partnership among stakeholders was effective when the following are in place (Willetts et al., 2021):

- Shared vision, purpose and ownership of the partnership
- Transparent collaborative processes and rules of engagement
- Shared decision making, actions and feedback
- Mutual learning to evolve the partnership

This research highlighted the first two of these in particular as enablers for effective multi-stakeholder engagement. In addition, eight further enablers identified across the five countries were identified, giving ten potential enablers for effective multi-stakeholder engagement from this research:

- Shared vision, purpose and goals
- Transparent collaborative processes and rules of engagement
- Coordinated, committed leadership from government
- Voiced demand from civil society and other stakeholders
- Adequate resourcing for organization of stakeholder engagement
- Cascading multi-stakeholder platforms to sub-national level
- External drivers such as COVID-19 and climate change
- Demand to access knowledge and data
- Well-defined, active focal points from each stakeholder constituency
- Opportunity to help set the agenda

Shared vision, purpose and goals were reported as enablers in Indonesia, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay. In Indonesia, members of the civil society network (Jejaring AMPL) have a dedicated vision to SDG 6 and have worked in the sector a long time, whereas members of the government coordination mechanism (Pokja) are often transferred to non-WASH positions – reducing shared vision and goals. In Nepal, an enabler was discovered when WASH stakeholders prioritized achievement of SDG 6 rather than prioritizing organization-centred projects and visibility of their organization. In Paraguay, interviewees also pointed out the importance of alignment and prioritization of shared goals over individual organizational goals, of shared aims and objectives around fulfillment of basic human rights. International days (e.g. World Water Day) were mentioned as enablers of multi-stakeholder engagement in both Nepal and Niger, as they give opportunity to strengthen shared goals.

It should be noted that there may be circumstances where ‘sharing a vision’ among stakeholders may not be helpful to realizing the human rights to water and sanitation and achieving SDG 6. For example, if a government’s vision is not aligned with human rights, then the role of other stakeholders is to challenge this and work towards a common vision that is aligned with the protection of human rights.

Transparent collaborative processes and rules of engagement based on trust were important enablers in Indonesia, Kenya, Niger and Paraguay. A basic ingredient for collaborative processes is trust and relationships. These were mentioned in both Indonesia and Kenya. In Indonesia it was noted that “trust is an enabling condition”, and that “...without trust, it will be difficult to collaborate.” In

Paraguay, the importance of formalizing the mechanisms for participation between stakeholders was emphasized and suggested to comprise structured protocols to support cooperation – or even to legislate the participation of each stakeholder. In Kenya and Niger, the importance of mechanisms was highlighted to name, recognize and reward strong contributions or performance, and applaud where there is progress – and linked to this was the importance of establishing sufficient trust to say where there are flaws.

Coordinated, committed leadership from government with openness to engage with other stakeholders was identified as an enabler in Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay. In Kenya, a supportive structure for stakeholder engagement relied on increased realization of government of their duty-bearer role, their encouragement of other stakeholders to participate in multi-stakeholder engagement and committed support from individual heads of relevant departments. In Nepal, interviewees felt that government should take the lead role in multi-stakeholder engagement, developing an action plan, stakeholder mapping and encouraging others to participate. In Niger, governmental organization of periodic meetings for different stakeholder platforms was an identified enabler. In Paraguay, increased openness from government towards civil society and development actors has supported multi-stakeholder engagement, and it was suggested that this needs to be complemented with clear frameworks for action and priorities that can guide other stakeholders.

Voiced demand from civil society and other stakeholders was noted as an enabler in Kenya, Niger and Paraguay. In Kenya, voice from people and civil society as well as support from other stakeholders, has been an impetus for multi-stakeholder engagement. In Niger, advocacy from citizens, particularly during election periods, supports commitments that meet their needs. In Paraguay, influence and insistence of cooperation by civil society organizations, and donor agencies such as UNICEF, have been an enabler of collaborative projects between stakeholders, and an increased voice of civil society has had a major influence on the creation and maintenance of participatory platforms among stakeholders.

Adequate resourcing and capacity for organization of stakeholder engagement was noted as an enabler in Kenya, Nepal and Paraguay. In Kenya, interviewees shared that multi-stakeholder platforms and processes need funds and resources to hold meetings, workshops and conferences, relying on stakeholders pooling their resources or institutionalized funding from the government budget. In Nepal, the need for adequate management of resources (financial, human, materials, etc.), to organize trainings, workshops, seminars for stakeholders was similarly indicated. In Niger, common funds recently allocated by the relevant government ministry has facilitated stakeholder platform meetings and monitoring and evaluation activities on WASH sector progress. In Paraguay, the required staff capacity and expertise among both public sector institutions as well as other stakeholder organizations was noted as an important enabler.

Cascading multi-stakeholder platforms to sub-national level was a perceived enabler in Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay. In each country, interviewees described the importance of having collaborative platforms at each level of government. In Kenya, this would require engagement of the Council of County Governors Water and Sanitation Chief Executive Committee Forum. In Nepal, respondents described the required structure at central, provincial, and local level to coordinate improved cooperation among the stakeholders. In Niger, the important of sensitization and involvement of local stakeholders was identified, including village, municipalities and regional levels. In Paraguay, it was suggested that decentralized management where municipalities play a key role, as well as a regulatory body working in close communication with service providers, could increase available, reliable sectoral information.

External drivers such as COVID-19 and climate change have brought stakeholders together in Kenya and in Paraguay. In Kenya, COVID-19 pushed stakeholders to move out of their silos to support emergency response measures, as the WASH sector became a central focus of the crisis. The immediacy of the crisis forced stakeholders to cooperate and act in short time-frames, and placed them on an even playing field. In Paraguay, increased visibility of extreme weather events and resultant issues with water and sanitation systems has raised concern among communities. It has prompted the formation of emergency groups, which support stakeholders to join forces and coordinate their response to specific issues and events. It has also initiated dialogue between stakeholders to resolve both current difficulties and improved planning for medium- and long-term measures.

Demand for and access to knowledge and data was an enabler reported in Kenya and Niger. In Kenya, the need for mechanisms to share new knowledge, technologies and best practices in the sector has brought stakeholders closer together. In Niger, information and data sharing was also noted as an enabler.

The presence of well-defined, active focal points from each stakeholder constituency was identified in Indonesia and Kenya as an enabler. In Indonesia it was noted that: “each constituency should have a leader [focal point], it would be good [to design it] that way”. In Kenya, interviewees noted that if focal points from the various constituencies are well-networked, vocal and skilled at reaching out, then this would facilitate effective multi-stakeholder engagement.

Opportunity to help set the agenda was noted as an enabler in Indonesia, where agenda setting was seen as a driving motive for stakeholder participation in a multi-stakeholder engagement, particularly for large organizations which consider themselves to be ‘major players’.

Examples of the specific enablers identified in Paraguay are explored in Box 4 below.

Box 4: Enablers of multi-stakeholder engagement in Paraguay

In Paraguay, partnership between the different stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector is still very recent. There are still no formalized structures or events that bring together these actors under established regulations and protocols to guide joint work. In recent years, there has been greater openness and willingness on the part of the Government. Civil society in particular has taken on a leading role in lobbying and engaging with government to address certain needs in the sector through specific plans and projects, often with financial or technical support from the donor community. The most common example where multi-stakeholder cooperation happens is for specific projects with dedicated funding, where the interests and efforts of the actors come together.

The enabling factors identified that have been conducive to collaboration between stakeholders in Paraguay were political will, advocacy by cooperation agencies and civil society, emerging needs (e.g. the increased visibility of extreme weather events), support from the donor community and international cooperation agencies and alignment of interests and objectives.

Practitioners also raised additional factors that could encourage and facilitate multi-stakeholder participation in Paraguay’s WASH sector. These included: formalization of the instruments of participation between stakeholders; having the necessary staff capacity and expertise; clearly defined functions and roles of public institutions in order to avoid duplication; having a governing body capable of establishing clear frameworks to set lines of action and priorities for the sector; and a strong regulatory body and decentralised water management.

[Adapted from country report]

Challenges in multi-stakeholder engagement

Multiple challenges for effective multi-stakeholder engagement were raised cross the five countries. They can be said to fall into three main categories:

- Firstly, **leadership and coordination challenges**. These include poor coordination across different national government agencies; poor coordination between national and sub-national stakeholders; government instability and corruption; and an ad hoc, unstructured approach to multi-stakeholder engagement.
- Secondly, **practical challenges**. These include limited available resources to support multi-stakeholder engagement; difficulties achieving consistent participation due to staff rotation; and poor sectoral information (such as lack of reliable, recent data and/or reduced accessibility to that data).
- Thirdly, **challenges related to relationships and incentives to participate**. These include power differences; varying levels of influence and trust; the absence of, or limited participation by, key stakeholder groups; poor networking and linkages between key stakeholder groups; organizations choosing to work alone (often due to perceived competition between organizations).

These challenges are described further below, with an example from Indonesia of how some of these challenges could be overcome through engagement with the SWA partnership, as a platform for dialogue and engagement (see Box 5).

Leadership and coordination challenges

Uncoordinated government agencies create a lack of clear leadership of multi-stakeholder engagement processes in Kenya and Paraguay. In Kenya, poor clarity on where authority and mandates lie also reduced clarity for multi-stakeholder engagement. In Paraguay, a lack of clarity of roles between national public sector actors was said to result in duplication, overlapping and uncoordinated functions, creating a particularly challenging environment for multi-stakeholder engagement.

Ad hoc, unstructured approach to multi-stakeholder engagement was observed in Kenya, Nepal and Paraguay, with the three countries suggesting that greater structure and formalization of multi-stakeholder work was needed. In Kenya meetings were said to lack a well-structured approach and regular, predictable timings. In Nepal, most interviewees noted that there was no regular schedule for meetings and an overall lack of coordination among water and sanitation stakeholders. In Paraguay, there are multi-stakeholder spaces established by law in other sectors (such as for climate change), but no formal structure for the WASH sector. Interviewees proposed the need for a structured body with established protocols to guide joint work and ensure the participation of different stakeholders.

Poor coordination between national and sub-national stakeholders was a challenge noted in Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Paraguay. In Kenya, its system of devolved government means that implementation takes place at different levels, creating complexities for coordination of national stakeholders and requiring specific platforms to facilitate engagement. In Nepal, provincial-level multi-stakeholder platforms are not established and functional, and the coordination committees at national, provincial, district, and local level require reforms if they are to contribute effectively. In Niger, there is a lack of consultation frameworks for partners at the local, regional and national level. In Paraguay,

management is currently highly centralized. The sector may benefit from a devolution of responsibilities which could share responsibility with lower levels of government – with a corresponding need to strengthen institutional capacity at sub-national level.

Government instability and corruption were noted as challenges affecting the context for multi-stakeholder engagement in Nepal and Paraguay. In Nepal, this instability occurs at both federal and provincial level and influences the priorities of the sector. In Paraguay, the presence of corruption in public bodies was said to create a low level of trust in the institutions and affects relationships with other stakeholders.

Practical challenges

Limited available resources to support multi-stakeholder engagement was observed in Kenya and Niger. In Kenya, lack of funds rendered stakeholder engagement inconsistent and ad hoc or even dormant. Meetings rely on voluntary support from participating organizations which may be challenging to sustain, and a dependence on external development partners leaves the mechanisms susceptible to changed priorities. In Niger, there was also insufficient funding to support different multi-stakeholder activities, such as capacity building, workshops and data collection.

Achieving consistent participation given staff rotation poses significant risks for multi-stakeholder engagement, as was noted specifically in Kenya. Changes in leadership in both government and other organizations can disrupt multi-stakeholder engagement, particularly when participation is not institutionalized within the relevant organizations and instead is based on individuals' skills, interest and goodwill.

Limited accessibility and availability of sectoral information was noted to affect multi-stakeholder engagement in Niger and Paraguay. In Niger, insufficient data collection and sharing of such data were highlighted as reducing the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement. In Paraguay, there is no integrated and accessible information system, which diminishes opportunity for cooperation between stakeholders, can lead to duplication of efforts, and means sectoral data from the >5000 service providers is not readily available. Strengthened dissemination of evidence was suggested as a means to improve meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement, as was greater sharing of financing information, to support coordinated investment efforts.

Challenges to consider regarding relationships and incentives to participate

Power differences, and varied levels of influence and trust were intertwined and affected the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement in Indonesia and Nepal. In Indonesia, some participants felt power differentials, particularly between the Government and CSOs. It was also noted that although stakeholders may be invited to attend and present views on a policy matter to government, in practice they may have different available resources to participate, meaning that influence to shape policies inevitably goes to those with more resources. In Nepal, power differences and lack of trust affected interactions of stakeholders, particularly between government and CSOs, but also between government and the private sector, and between CSOs and private sector.

Limited participation and missing stakeholder groups was noted as a challenge in Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal and Paraguay. In previous development of SWA commitments, Indonesian participants suggested that there had been a lack of diverse participation, but that this had now improved. In Kenya, there remains many actors who are unaware of the multi-stakeholder platforms and processes. In

Nepal, the private sector was completely absent, and there was a need to map the breadth of WASH actors. In Paraguay, it was noted that service users themselves did not have a voice in sector discussions. This informed a recommendation to form an active body to represent water and sanitation users to government and other stakeholders.

Organizations choosing to work alone and perceived competition between organizations was a challenge facing multi-stakeholder engagement in Indonesia, Kenya and Paraguay. In Indonesia, some development partners choose to engage bilaterally with government to exert influence rather than in inclusive processes involving other actors, particularly in areas of overlapping interests between development partners. One respondent stated: “What I see is that ... organization X [a major development partner] still does not want to utilize Jejaring [as a coordinating platform].” Similarly, in Kenya, it was observed that some stakeholders prefer to work alone, and that some NGOs and donor agencies have actively chosen not to participate in multi-stakeholder platforms or to be open with other stakeholders. Suggested reasons for this were given, including the fear that their ideas and strategies might be taken up and – in effect – ‘stolen’ by others. In Paraguay, some public institutions were self-focused, looking after their own interests and blaming others for failures, suggesting an urgent need to reduce perception of competition and to seek ways of joining forces towards the development and realization of wider, shared goals.

Box 5: SWA seen as a credible, neutral platform in Indonesia, helping address challenges

In Indonesia, there was increasing engagement around the SWA partnership, particularly ahead of the SWA Sector Minister’s Meeting which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in May 2022. This engagement helped to increase multi-stakeholder interactions, in turn helping to address challenges affecting the sector – such as power differences between stakeholders, the ‘constituencies’ silos and a lack of engagement in multi-stakeholder processes by some development partners.

The SWA platform, according to respondents, has the potential to mediate power differences. As one respondent put it: “With SWA’s support, we can be more neutral from agenda setting, because SWA itself works as a coordinating platform.”

When asked about what makes them interested in SWA as a partnership, participants during the focus group discussion answered along similar lines, describing SWA as a way “to level the playing field...”. Another was more specific, saying: “people will feel three benefits: learning hub, networking hub...with a global platform, the local [players] will follow... jumping on the bandwagon.”

Participants were of the opinion that the SWA’s partnership structure, which categorizes stakeholders into ‘constituencies’, would enable multi-stakeholder engagement to advance. For example: “I am happier that way... Coordination and advocacy divided into constituencies... each constituency should have a leader [focal point], it would be good [to design it] that way.”

Accountability and multi-stakeholder commitment making

Earlier research⁴ conducted on SWA’s Mutual Accountability Mechanism developed a framework with four critical processes that support an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder engagement, and five

⁴ Willetts, J., Winterford, K., Liera, C., and Dickin, S. (2020). *Strengthening mutual accountability in partnerships for WASH: Part 1 - Literature review and learning from other sectors*. Prepared by UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, SEI, IRC and SWA Research and Learning Constituency for Sanitation and Water for All Partnership. [Available here](#)

key elements of mutual accountability between stakeholders. These can be seen in Figure 6 below, with the four critical processes on the outer ring and the five key elements in the inner ring. These five elements of mutual accountability were used to structure the questionnaire with stakeholders, to support assessment as to which parts of the accountability 'cycle' are currently working, or not.

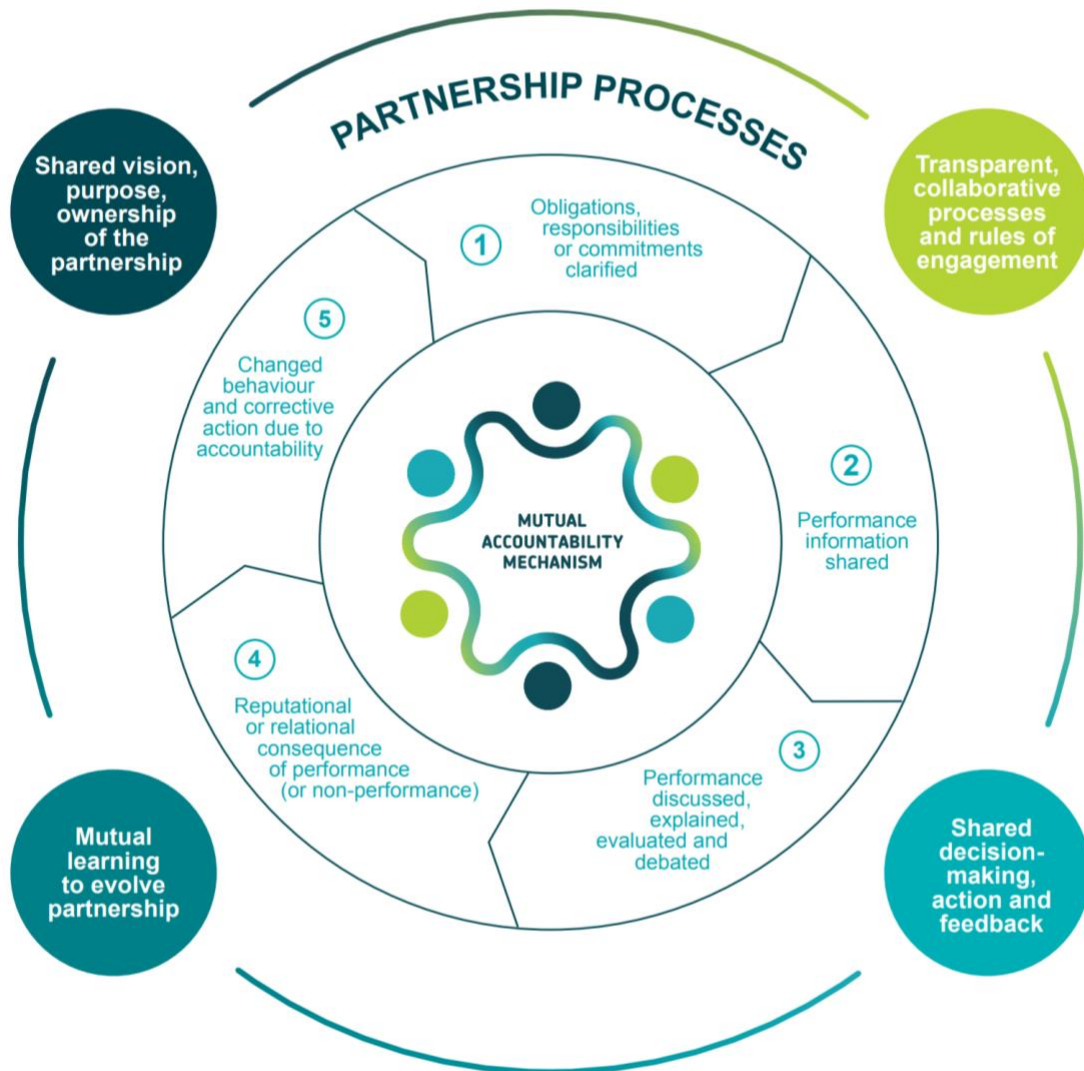


Figure 5: The five elements of an effective mutual accountability cycle (inside ring) and four partnership processes (outside ring)

Overall, scores for commitment-making and accountability were lower than scores given for multi-stakeholder engagement, demonstrating the need for further work in this area. Comparing responses between countries, Niger gave the highest scores for all aspects of commitment-making as compared to other countries, and both Kenya and Paraguay had areas that were working better or worse. For example, in Kenya, stakeholder plans were aligned to those of government, but there were no positive incentives for stakeholders to hold one another accountable. In Paraguay, there was discussion of progress and performance, but not on the basis of clear information about plans, targets and commitments.

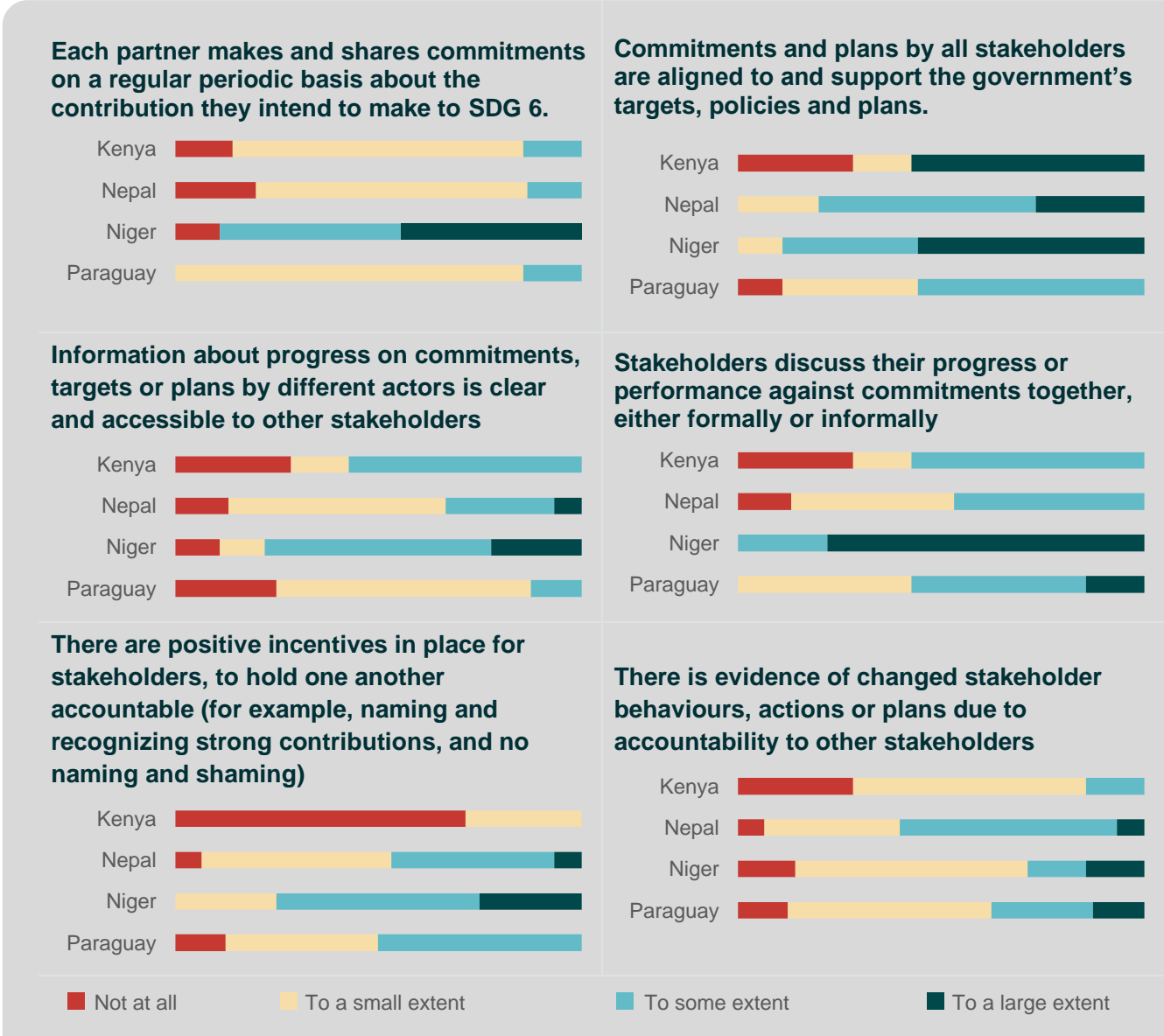


Figure 6. Statements concerning commitment-making and mutual accountability: country-level assessment⁵

In **Indonesia**, the focus group noted that the previous SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism commitment drafting in 2016 was much less participatory compared to the drafting of commitments in 2022. As such, stakeholders perceived that multi-stakeholder engagement on commitment-making had improved, both through events led by Bappenas (the national planning agency) and through SWA’s Mutual Accountability Mechanism catalytic support, which the country received in 2022.

In **Kenya**, a few respondents indicated a limited knowledge of SWA’s Mutual Accountability Mechanism. One respondent was not aware of the mechanism and commitments made, despite being from an important government agency. This confirms that although several actors and all sector constituencies are represented in the platform, the understanding and potential benefits of the mechanism have not been adequately circulated in the country and are not embedded in the sector’s

⁵ Note: Indonesia is omitted from these figures, as these questions were not asked in that country

culture. Some interviewees suggested that stakeholders discuss their progress or performance against commitments together, either formally or informally. In particular, a CSO respondent acknowledged the efforts made by government: “When we did the first quarterly review, for me it appeared that government was more organized, and clear on progress made in its commitments, and seemed to be doing much better than most other constituencies, who must have been challenged to also want to make improvements”. All respondents noted that there are not yet any positive incentives in place, such as ‘naming and faming’ for stakeholders to hold one another accountable.

In **Nepal**, there are seven commitments made by the Nepal Government under SWA’s Mutual Accountability Mechanism which need to be supported by other stakeholders. Recently, CSOs have made six commitments and R&L institutions have made four commitments to support the Government’s commitments. Overall though, it was suggested that commitment-making and accountability was weak among WASH stakeholders. There were mixed views about whether performance is discussed, and few thought that clear information on commitments, targets and plans were shared. Few felt that positive incentives were in place to support mutual accountability (such as naming and faming), and also that behaviour changed little as a result of accountability between stakeholders.

In **Niger**, the results are similar to those concerning multi-stakeholder engagement, where the local actors (at village and municipality level) are not informed about accountability processes and are not associated in the evaluation of the progress in WASH sub-sectors. However, responses among stakeholders at national level demonstrated that some dimensions of commitment-making and accountability were in place.

In **Paraguay**, the SWA partnership is mostly known by the sector’s governing body, the donor community, civil society organizations and, to a lesser extent, academia, all of whom stated that partners at least moderately share their commitments and progress. Respondents indicated that it is difficult for stakeholder actors to align their commitments and plans with government objectives, policies and plans when these are not presented and clearly defined. The lack of information systems to enable awareness of the activities of other stakeholders is highlighted – particularly the lack of information available from public bodies. As to whether there is evidence that any stakeholder’s actions or behaviour have changed due to accountability to other stakeholders, opinions were divided. The public sector and parts of academia argued that there is little evidence, while civil society organizations and donors acknowledged that, to some extent, this has been the case.

Assessment by different stakeholder groups

It was found that different stakeholder groups had differing perceptions of SWA, commitment making and accountability. Donors, CSOs and private sector thought more people knew about SWA and its Mutual Accountability Mechanism compared with government, researchers and media organizations. Donors felt that few partners make commitments, as compared to the views of other stakeholder groups. Government, researchers, CSOs and the media sector felt that commitments were aligned to and supported government plans, whereas private sector respondents did not. Most stakeholders felt information on progress on commitments by different actors was clear and accessible to other stakeholders to a small extent. Most stakeholder groups thought that progress or performance was discussed to some extent. Most stakeholder groups thought that there were not yet positive incentives in place to hold one another to account (such as ‘naming and faming’), though of all actors, CSOs considered this to exist to a small extent.



Figure 7: Different stakeholder views on accountability and commitment-making

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research identifies numerous benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement. The most common benefits included strengthening of social capital in the sector, mobilizing collective strengths and resources, and maximizing participation and consultation. Other benefits identified include fostering common approaches, terminology and reducing duplication. There were three main beneficial ‘results’ of multi-stakeholder engagement identified: diverse inputs to laws and policies; improving progress in access to services; and development of shared information systems.

An assessment of multi-stakeholder engagement in the five countries revealed ways in which trust, power and the valuing of collaborative work affected ability to work together and to create synergy towards collective goals. Variations in stakeholder perspectives on these dimensions demonstrated the different experiences of diverse stakeholders, and the importance of addressing these to improve effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement. The research suggests the benefits of developing a shared vision and common purpose, as well as highlighting some clear collaborative processes and elements that improve engagement. Leadership from government was also highlighted as key, as was voiced demand from civil society, active well-networked constituency focal points, adequate resourcing, and linkages to multi-stakeholder engagement at sub-national levels. Challenges to overcome included engaging missing groups, a lack of trust and the presence of unhealthy competition, staff rotation, insufficient sector structures, and poor coordination – particularly between national and sub-national actors and between ministries.

Accountability and commitment-making scored lower overall than multi-stakeholder engagement, demonstrating the need to broaden multi-stakeholder work to include specific actions. Knowledge of SWA was mixed in several countries, as was the diversity of stakeholder groups making commitments.

In general follow-up to share and discuss progress was limited, and there were few incentives in place to support stakeholders to hold one another to account.

The study provides evidence of the need to continue to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement as the basis and foundation to provide a conducive environment for mutual accountability among stakeholders. Multi-stakeholder engagement primarily took place in the form of coordination platforms rather than partnerships, with additional specific multi-stakeholder processes in some countries, and yet platforms merely provide coordination. They may need additional elements of shared vision, goals and clearer formalized collaborative mechanisms to build the necessary relationships and trust, to move towards a sense of partnership across different stakeholder groups.

Each country developed its own recommendations based on their findings. In summary, these were:

- In **Indonesia**, the emphasis was on leveraging SWA further as a neutral platform to convene stakeholders, reduce sensitivities and to shift from coordination to mutual accountability, with agreement on the extent to proceduralize a mutual accountability mechanism and how it would be organized, led and financed to maintain independency and legitimacy.
- In **Kenya**, it was proposed to build sustainable and more inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement by bringing more national-level stakeholders on board and cascading the collaboration platforms to the sub-national level, to build trust among stakeholder groups before they can feel comfortable holding each other to account, to increase the consistency and inclusivity of meetings and build government capacity to lead.
- In **Nepal**, recommendations included taking immediate action to activate multi-stakeholder platforms at national, provincial, district and municipal levels. Based on an annual calendar of activities, use national engagement to hold government to account for delivery of important sectoral plans, develop a joint multi-stakeholder monitoring mechanism for SDG 6, and ensure the central management information system continues to be supported.
- In **Niger**, it was proposed to increase ownership of SDG targets, particularly by CSOs, to increase regularity and follow-up of meetings of the National Water and Sanitation Commission, improve the State-CSO consultation framework and build trust to facilitate honest critique, and increase stakeholder engagement on international meeting and monitoring results (e.g. SWA's High-level Meetings, Joint Monitoring Programme data).
- In **Paraguay**, it was recommended to reactivate existing platforms, defining protocols for commitment-making, decision-making and accountability among members, to reactivate the donor roundtable, to strengthen sub-national government engagement, and disseminate results and benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation to build the case for actors to increase their participation. In the medium term, to also establish a formalized space for articulated work between different stakeholder groups, with established protocols governing their activities and mutual obligations.

Recommendations for SWA and global level actors are to:

- Make the case to national governments on the benefits of multi-stakeholder partnership among stakeholders to collectively address SDG 6 and realize the human rights to water and sanitation.
- Increase funding targeted at strengthening government-led multi-stakeholder partnerships and their effectiveness towards achieving universal access to services.
- Strengthen a culture of mutual accountability for results through multi-stakeholder partnerships, ensuring that different stakeholder groups can engage fully, pushing against any closures of civic space.
- Increase opportunities for cross-country exchange and learning about effective multi-stakeholder engagement and invest in action-research processes to improve their effectiveness.

Acting on these recommendations is a key priority, as the SWA partnership is committed to championing multi-stakeholder approaches and accountability in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector and beyond. SWA aims to do this through increasing engagement with constituencies that are currently underrepresented in decision-making processes and through continuing to implement its Mutual Accountability Mechanism, under which, as of October 2022, well over 400 commitments have already been made.

References

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5. Kusters, K., et al. (2018). 'Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms in Integrated Landscape Initiatives', in *Environmental Management*, volume 62, pages 170-181
6. Reid, S., Hayes, J., & Stibbe, D. (2014). *Platforms for Partnership: Emerging good practice to systematically engage business as a partner in development*. The Partnering Initiative, Oxford.
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Annexes

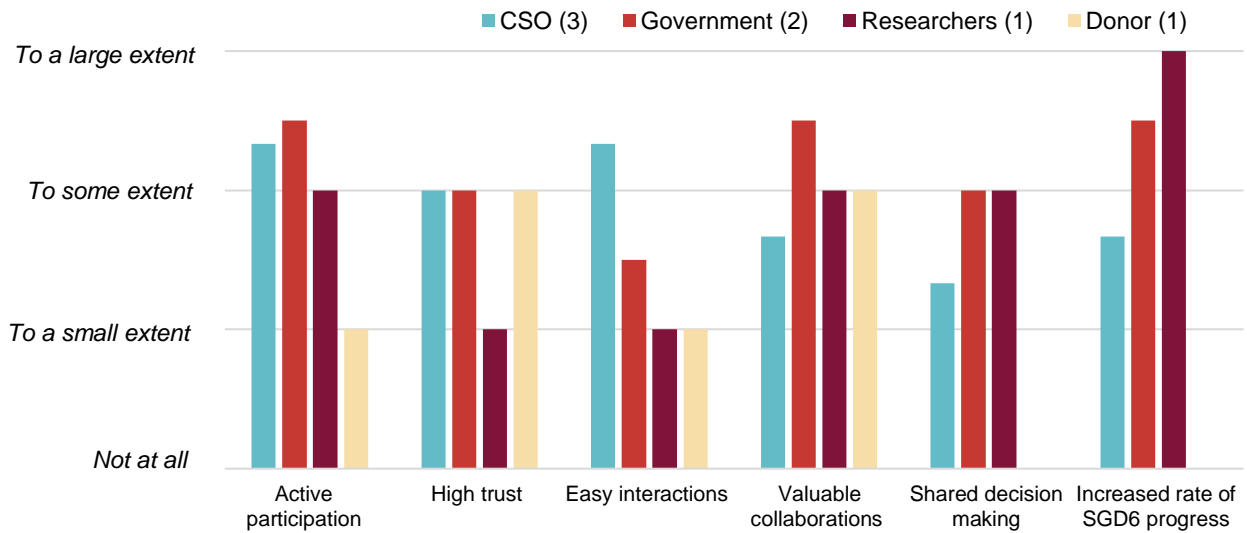
Statements concerning multi-stakeholder engagement at national level

| Category | Statement | Short hand statement |
|--|--|---|
| Stakeholder engagement in relevant forum, platform or partnership | There is active participation from many different stakeholder groups | Active participation |
| | The level of trust between stakeholders is high | High trust |
| | Stakeholders work easily with one another, without major power differences | Easy interactions |
| | The different stakeholders value working collaboratively together, rather than separately, to achieve SDG 6 | Value working collaboratively |
| | Decisions between stakeholders are shared and are not just made by single actors or a single actor | Shared decision making |
| | Our national stakeholder engagement processes have increased the rate of progress to achieve SDG 6 | Increased rate of SGD 6 progress |
| Commitment-making and accountability | Most stakeholders know about SWA and the Mutual Accountability Mechanism | SWA and MAM are known |
| | Each partner makes and shares commitments on a regular periodic basis about the contribution they intend to make to SDG 6 | Partners communicate commitments |
| | Commitments and plans by all stakeholders are aligned to and support the government's targets, policies and plans | Commitments aligned to government plan |
| | Information about progress on commitments, targets or plans by different actors is clear and accessible to other stakeholders | Progress information is accessible |
| | Stakeholders discuss their progress or performance against commitments together, either formally or informally | Stakeholders discuss their progress |
| | There are positive incentives in place for stakeholders, to hold one another accountable (for example, naming and recognizing strong contributions, and no naming and shaming) | Positive incentives to support accountability |
| | There is evidence of changed stakeholder behaviours, actions or plans due to accountability to other stakeholders | Evidence of changed behaviour |

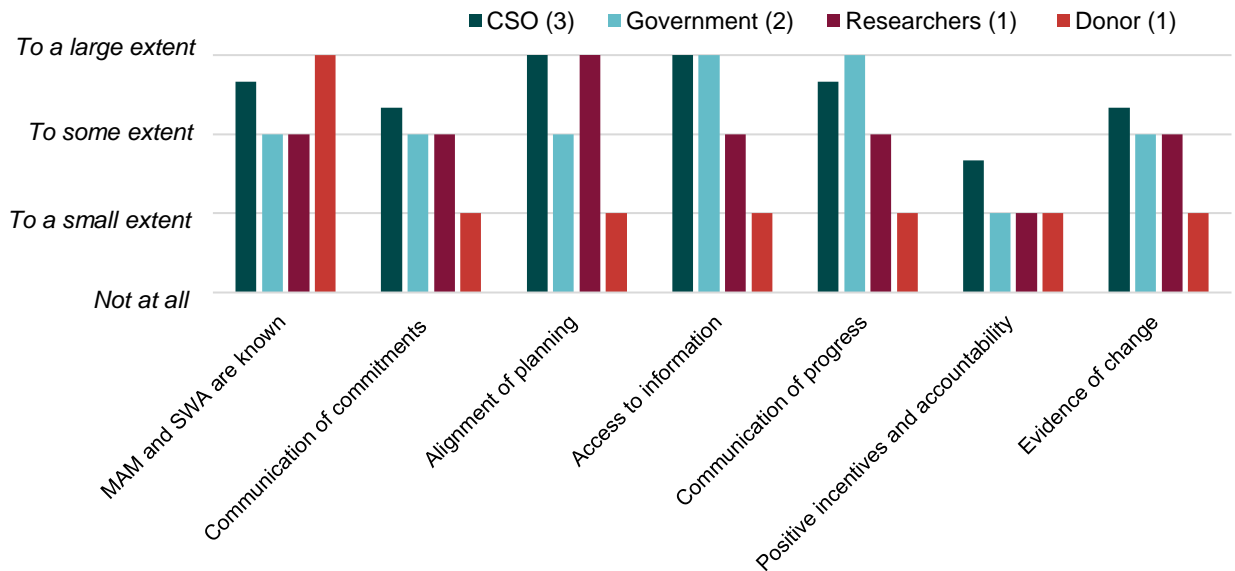
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement | Your organization's participation in multi-stakeholder processes has been beneficial to you | Participation is beneficial to organization |
| | Your organization would like to increase your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement processes for SDG 6 | Wish to increase participation |

Kenya

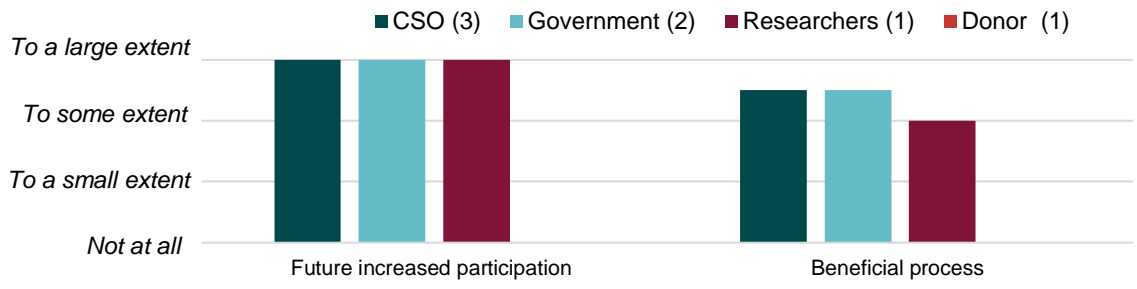
Stakeholder engagement in relevant forum, platform or partnership



Commitment-making and accountability

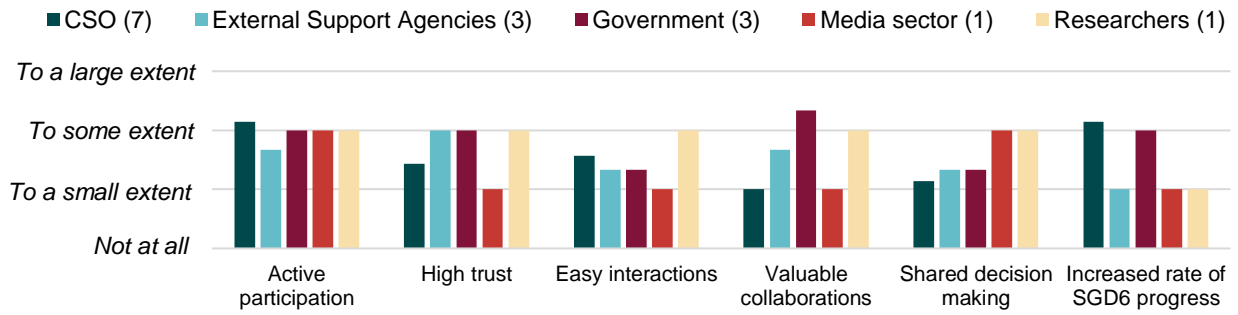


Your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement

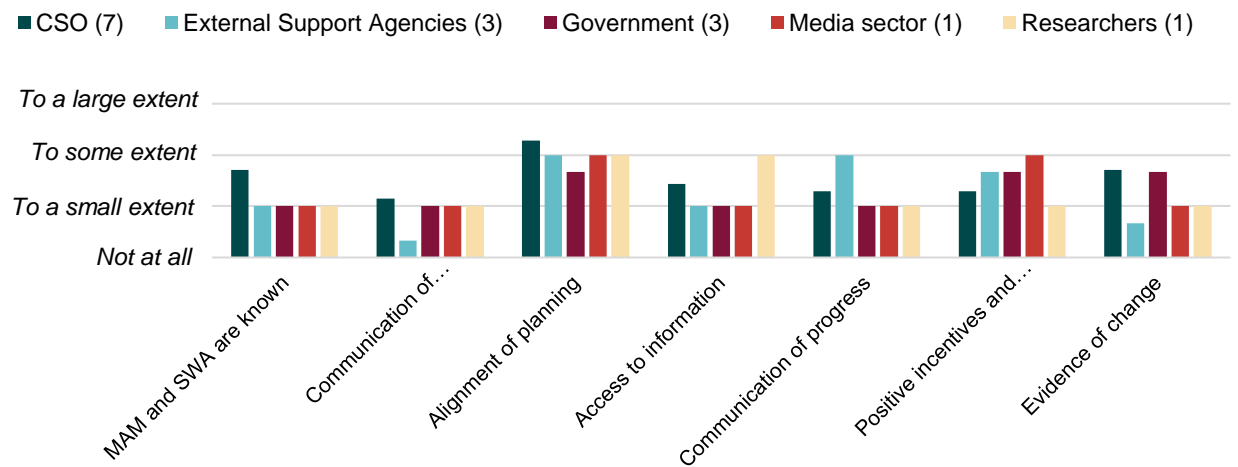


Nepal

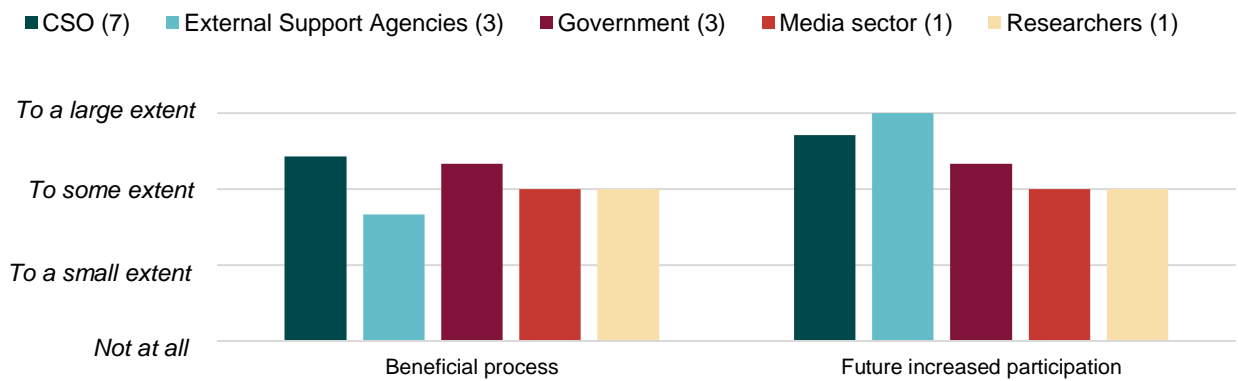
Participation in multi-stakeholder engagement



Participation in commitment making

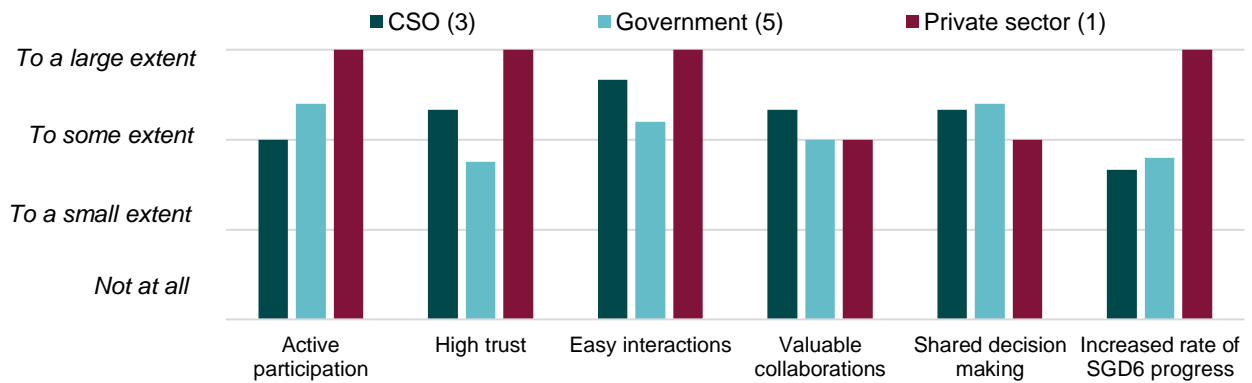


Your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement

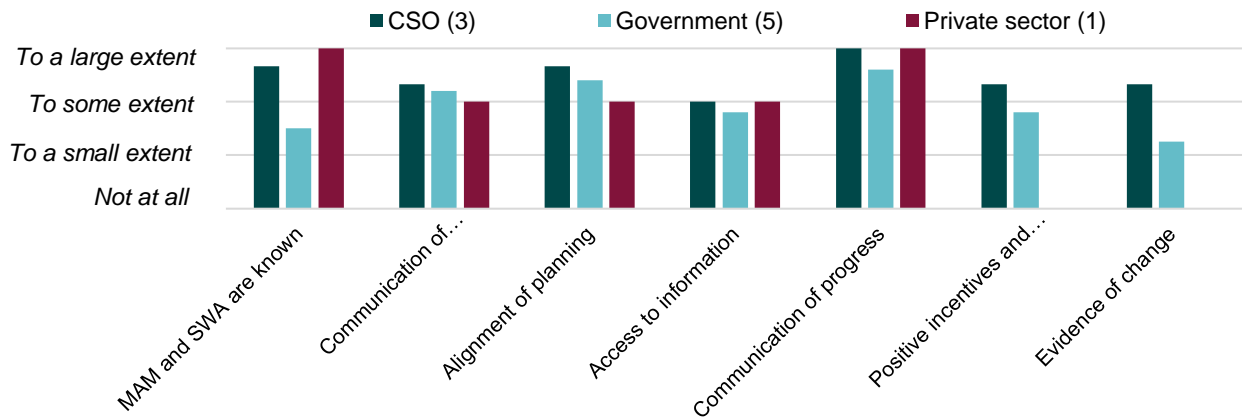


Niger

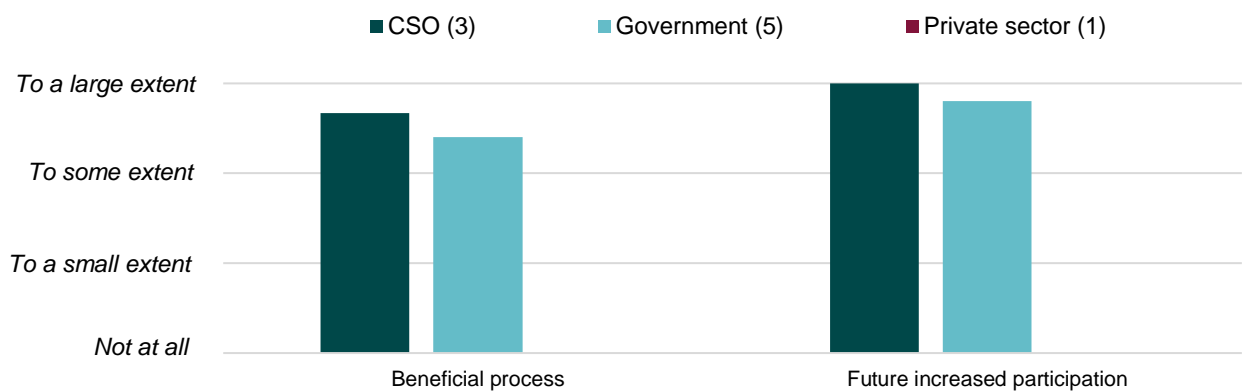
Participation in multi-stakeholder engagement



Participation in commitment making

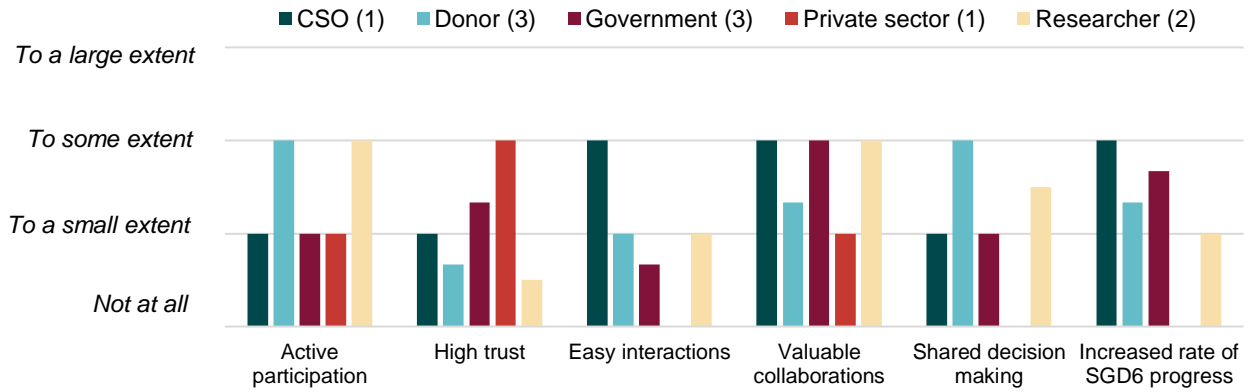


Your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement

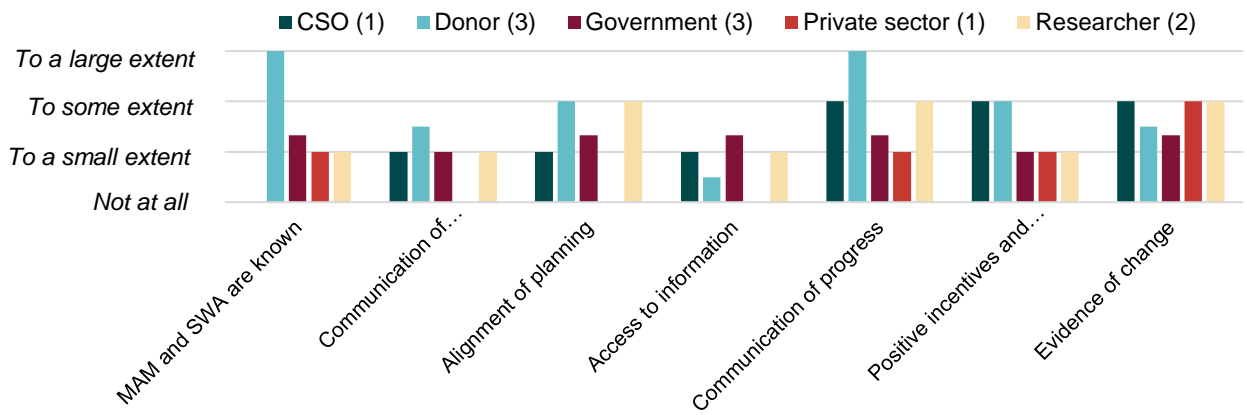


Paraguay

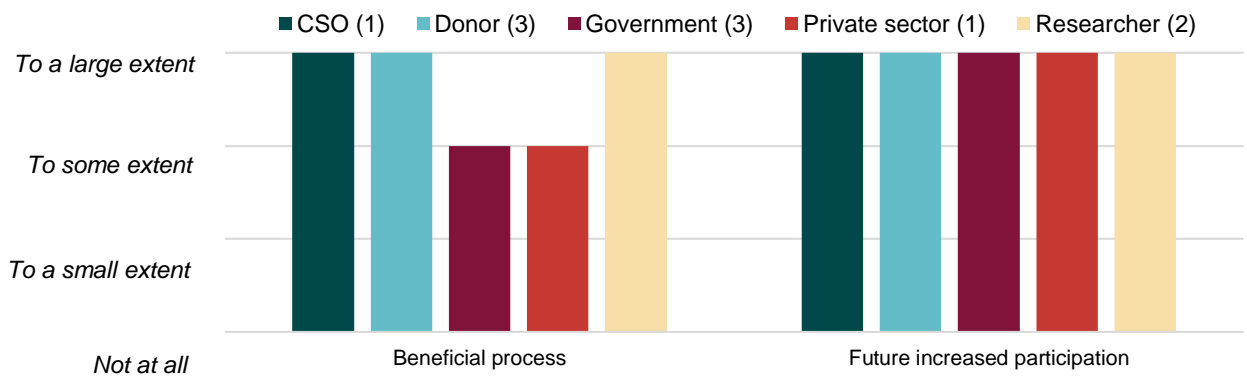
Participation in multi-stakeholder engagement



Participation in commitment making



Your participation in multi-stakeholder engagement



Indonesia

