The MSP Sourcebook

A Guide for **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships** in Water Management

Laurent-Charles Tremblay-Lévesque, Jeroen Warner, Irina Gribanenkova, and Molly Robbins.

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About GWP

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) vision is for a water secure world. Our mission is to advance governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development. GWP is an international network that was created in 1996 to foster the implementation of integrated water resources management: the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of ecosystems and the environment.

The GWP Network is open to all organisations which recognise the principles of integrated water resources management endorsed by the GWP Network. It includes states, government institutions (national, regional, and local), intergovernmental organisations, international and national non-governmental organisations, academic and research institutions, private sector companies, and service providers in the public sector. The Network has 13 Regional Water Partnerships, 77 Country Water Partnerships, and more than 3,000 Partners located in 183 countries.

The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the official views of GWP.

Editors

Laurent-Charles Tremblay-Lévesque, Jeroen Warner, Irina Gribanenkova, and Molly Robbins.

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Preface

Jaehyang So

GWP Technical Committee Chair,
Global Water Partnership

In recent years, recognition of the importance and effectiveness of working in partnership to improve water governance has been growing. The Water Action Decade 2018–2028 emphasises the importance of cooperation and multi-stakeholder platforms or partnerships (MSPs) to address water challenges. World Water Day 2023 and the 2023 edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report are dedicated to "Accelerating Change through Partnerships and Cooperation", providing us with a great opportunity to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of partnership approaches to water management. As encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, partnerships contribute not only to improving access to water (SDG 6) but also to the broader realisation of the SDGs.

Those of us working with water have long understood that managing water means working in partnership. And we also know that this is far from straightforward. The complexity of water uses and users makes the daily work of MSPs challenging. Difficult questions abound, including how to bring the right partners into an MSP, how to set and execute shared plans for change, how to resolve conflict, and how to secure the resources necessary to sustain partnership work.

While literature on water and partnership is widely available, more practical tools are still needed. In engaging with hundreds of MSP leaders through the project "A Stake in Water", we have seen clearly that far too often, the unique issues faced by water partnerships and the lessons we learn from them are not captured or shared. This sourcebook is designed for practitioners – those of us designing, running, and guiding water MSPs. It aims to take an honest look at the challenges and possibilities of MSPs, and is organised around common questions that MSP practitioners face.

Dr Themba Gumbo

Director, Cap-Net UNDP

The SDGs require us to continuously reflect on our objectives and ensure that we take a partnership approach in our work to make a difference in reaching those goals – especially for those left furthest behind. This requires us to lift our focus above individual initiatives, overcome our siloed approaches, and engage in MSPs. We know that to achieve water security and water knowledge for all, we cannot do it alone. We rely on effective MSPs as key instruments to address the complexity of the world's water issues, and their ramifications for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

MSPs can have many shapes and sizes, from local grassroot networks to international partners. They spearhead and are at the core of the improved water governance and management practices that we accomplish every day. MSPs are indispensable to the development of technically sound programmes and knowledge materials that capacitate water stakeholders at all levels to deliver.

Effective engagement in MSPs requires a shift in thinking about how we carry out our day-to-day functions towards Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and improved water governance. We must focus on fostering, managing, or participating in MSPs working on water, with the aim of catalysing meaningful action for SDG 6, and for the attainment of all SDGs that depend on it.

Herman Brouwer

Senior Advisor, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research

This MSP Sourcebook is a timely and much-needed treasure trove of practical wisdom on how to advance MSPs in the water sector. It contains practical wisdom curated by practitioners themselves, supported by academics who can help practitioners to reflect on their experience and make sense of it. It is essential that we close this learning loop so that others can advance further than ever before.

Wageningen University & Research has a long tradition in pioneering multi-stakeholder collaboration, going back at least 40 years with Professor Niels Röling, together with partners in many countries in the Global North and South. This focus on collaboration, dialogue, and innovation stems from the notion that solutions to urgent societal challenges can only be found by joined-up thinking. It starts with the recognition that there are many different valid perspectives on a challenge such as water management, and that this diversity of views is in fact needed to arrive at effective solutions.

This realisation has at least two implications: first, that scientists need to get their hands dirty and engage and learn together with stakeholders, rather than observe from the proverbial ivory tower. Second, that it takes facilitation skills to bring these diverse stakeholder perspectives together. It implies helping stakeholders to explore the issues, create a shared language, work with power dynamics, manage conflict, set goals, measure progress, and implement agreed actions relentlessly. It sounds like... a lot. And it is neither quick nor easy. But we are seeing more and more examples where MSPs are getting it right, some of which are in this sourcebook.

When I co-wrote *The MSP guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships* in 2015, we still needed to convince people that MSPs could be an effective way forward to manage natural resources. Today, there isn't much convincing to be done: everybody seems to buy into the idea of stakeholder collaboration and partnering. But this enthusiasm is useless if it is not supported by practical tools and examples that show practitioners how to do it. MSPs are at risk of not delivering on their bold promise for systems change in water, unless we continue to invest in our capacities to design and facilitate them. This sourcebook is therefore an important resource for everybody who would like to join in this investment.

Introduction to the MSP Sourcebook

Why this MSP Sourcebook?

Managing water requires partnership, which can come in many forms. Yet too often, the mechanics of these partnerships and the hard lessons learned from them are not captured and shared. Many resources contain guidance on how to manage partnerships, and specifically multi-stakeholder platforms or partnerships (MSPs), but there are unique challenges to managing partnerships for water. This book is for practitioners; it seeks to fill a gap in knowledge for people who are forming, managing, or participating in MSPs working on water.

The role of the Global Water Partnership

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is a network of 3,000+ partner organisations in 169 countries. GWP is all about MSPs: it consists of dozens of layered and interrelated MSPs, of many different sizes, types, and levels of formality. GWP also participates in – and facilitates the formation and operation of – other MSPs. As such, the GWP network comprises hundreds of minds with valuable MSP expertise, and who have worked on every aspect of partnerships for water. This sourcebook seeks to bring forth lessons from that work, as well as offer practical insights for those working with MSPs in the water domain.

Purpose of the MSP Sourcebook

This book is a practical guide for those seeking to establish and strengthen MSPs as a means of catalysing action to achieve more sustainable water management.

Who is the MSP Sourcebook for?

This MSP Sourcebook particularly pertains to:

- **Practitioners:** Maybe you want to start a partnership for water. Maybe you have joined one, or want an existing one to work better. We have designed this sourcebook around key questions that might arise for you.
- **Decision-makers:** Governments are increasingly benefiting from MSPs in pursuit of water-related goals. This sourcebook can serve as a series of checklists and best practices for existing or new partnerships in which your government or institution is engaged.
- **Academia:** A great deal of knowledge is still lacking around what makes partnerships for water work, and the measurable impacts of working in partnership. We hope this book can lay out some of the knowledge and typologies for researchers, students, and others looking to enrich our shared knowledge base.

How to use the MSP Sourcebook

- **You don't need to read this sourcebook from cover to cover.** It is meant to be an easy reference for your questions about partnerships for water. It is a sort of cookbook, where you can choose to look into the recipes you need. You can follow the recipes step-by-step, or simply use them for inspiration. Skim the table of contents for questions you have, or dig into the chapters to see examples and tools.
- **Tools are marked with a 'tool' icon in the margins.** These are analytical and practical frameworks you can use in your own work. Some tools are explained in full, while others include links to further resources.
- **Case studies are marked in boxes.** These are stories from the GWP network and beyond that help illustrate the concepts in this sourcebook. They give practical insights into how partnership-based approaches have worked in the water sector (and how they sometimes also fail!). If a case study interests you, do not hesitate to reach out to us – we can connect you to those who might have further information or advice.
- **The GWP Toolbox IWRM Action Hub is another resource for more tools, relevant case studies, and technical references.** Links to GWP Toolbox resources are provided in the margins.

Introduction

MSPs & water management

What are MSPs?

- Defining MSPs
- What can they do?
- When are they appropriate?

Why are MSPs a good fit for the water sector?

- Water decisions need partnership
- Water and partnership on the global agenda

A taxonomy of Water MSPs

- Composition
- Initiation
- Sector
- Scope
- Scale
- Degree of formality

What makes an effective (water) MSP?

- Ingredient 1 – Context analysis
- Ingredient 2 – Setting an agenda for change
- Ingredient 3 – Knowledge management
- Ingredient 4 – Resource mobilisation
- Ingredient 5 – Effective communication
- Ingredient 6 – Conflict management

What are MSPs?

Defining MSPs

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Many words are used to describe the different types of partnership and collaboration arrangements present in environmental governance. These include: MSPs, platforms, initiatives, processes, dialogues, networks, coalitions, alliances, councils, and roundtables. The term **'multi-stakeholder partnership/platform'** (or MSP) has become one of the most-used umbrella terms to refer to "the idea that different groups can share a common problem or aspiration, while having different interests or stakes" (Brouwer et al., 2016, p. 12).

MSPs bring together representatives from different interest groups to discuss shared challenges, opportunities, policy actions, and advocacy strategies (see Box 1). They are one of the highest levels of stakeholder engagement and are characterised by an agreement between stakeholders[1] to share risks and benefits (Akhmouch and Clavreul, 2016; Arnstein, 1969).

Box 1. MSP definition

An MSP is a "decision-making body (voluntary or statutory) comprising different stakeholders who perceive the same resource management problem, realise their interdependence for solving it, and come together to agree on action strategies for solving the problem."

Source: Röling quoted in Steins and Edwards (1999).

What can they do?

An MSP can (aim to) answer several governance challenges. Some of the common areas where MSPs are expected to contribute include: empowering disadvantaged groups, resolving conflicts, building consensus or workable compromise, and enhancing social learning processes. Key MSP contributions in the water sector typically revolve around (Warner, 2006):

- Coordination, alignment on agenda setting
- Problem-solving
- (Alternative) dispute resolution
- Learning alliances, information exchange, and awareness-raising
- (Self-)empowerment, developing a voice, representation for marginalised groups
- Facilitating or bringing energy to slow or stalled processes

1 A stakeholder is someone who has got something important to lose (or gain) with respect to a scarce resource such as water.

The expected contributions derived from MSPs, however, depend on the context in which they are embedded, including how salient the issues are, the underlying relationships between actors, and the scale at which they operate. Taking the water sector as an example, an MSP set up to support access to water and sanitation at the community level may reap benefits in terms of empowering disadvantaged groups, while a multi-stakeholder dialogue for transboundary water management will likely bring more targeted contributions towards dispute resolution. It should be noted that although MSPs have great potential in terms of addressing complex governance issues, they are far from being able to do it all.

When are they appropriate?

MSPs may work better under some circumstances than others; they are adaptable, but they do not thrive in every environment. A few basic questions can allow you to assess whether an MSP is really fit for what you are aiming to do.

Why are MSPs a good fit for the water sector?

Water decisions need partnership

The governance of water resources is unique in many ways. Water, so essential to life, is a "critical, non-substitutable resource, which flows and fluctuates across time and space" (Wolf 2001). The dynamics and complexity of water present coordination challenges among a multitude of users and uses. MSPs are diverse entities and can be suitable for approaching water problems because:

- Water has diverse meanings and values. These include the intrinsic value of water and its instrumental value (highlighting the essential roles that water plays in sustaining life and our societies), as well as its relational value, pertaining to managing the resource responsibly and ethically.
- Water is characterised by a diversity and interdependency of uses and users. Competition for water resources exists between multiple sectors, including agriculture, industry, and households, which in turn should not compromise the water needs of ecosystems.
- The different functions performed by water require management techniques around drinking water supply and sanitation, water quality and quantity, flood protection, etc.

- Water runs across other non-water domains (for example: the Water-Energy-Food nexus). Most water problems are neither generated nor solved in the water domain alone.

- Water problems exist in many different forms. Perspectives on water challenges and solutions vary across a single watershed, not to mention different geographic regions.

Partnership and cooperation platforms are thus essential for achieving adaptative and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) (Box 2). Both MSPs and IWRM recognise the importance of participation and intersectoral cooperation. Dublin Principle 2 states that water development and management should be based on a participatory approach including users, planners, and policy-makers at all levels. MSPs are organisational forms that allow for such multi-scalar interaction to occur.

Box 2. Defining IWRM

IWRM is a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources, in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

Source: Global Water Partnership (2000).

Valuing Water

Moreover, MSPs provide a unique occasion for sharing perspectives on the **multiple values** (economic, amenity, aesthetic, social/cultural, ecological flow) that different people attach to water. This value sharing constitutes an essential step in having a well-informed conversation about how to achieve balanced use and allocation of water resources and work towards maximising the '3Es' (social equity, economic efficiency, and environmental sustainability). As such, the requirement for collaborative institutional processes (Watson et al., 2007) towards IWRM makes the case for MSPs.

Water and partnership on the global agenda

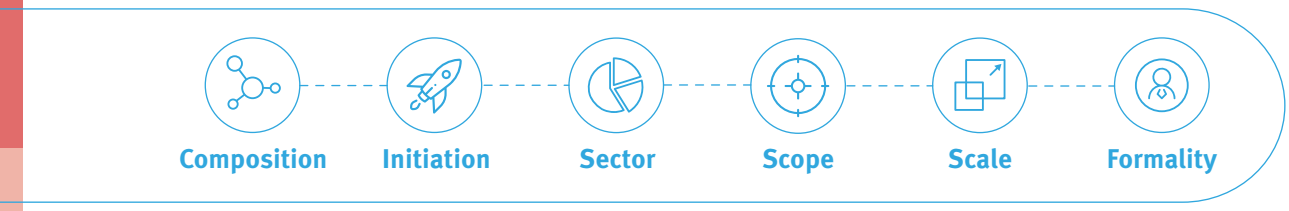
Partnership approaches were first articulated in a formal United Nations context at the Rio 1992 Summit, and have since evolved significantly. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda makes explicit reference to the need for MSPs. The SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework recognises that governance and collaboration across boundaries and sectors make Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 – ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – everyone's business. The participation of governments, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations family is fundamental to realising the framework's action pillars, including engagement, alignment, accounting, and acceleration (Aubert et al., 2018). Moreover, partnership and collaboration are explicitly recognised as a means of accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda through SDG 17: "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development."

Several other key global agreements and frameworks also support the need for water-related MSPs. The Water Action Decade 2018–2028 acknowledges the importance of deepening cooperation and partnership at all levels and recognises the important role of MSPs in building political support and leveraging investment in water and sanitation (United Nations, 2016). Other milestone agreements, including the 2015–2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity, highlight the need for partnerships and involving diverse stakeholders in water and environmental governance. In short, it is widely recognised that effective water management depends on partnerships, making a good understanding of MSPs crucial for water management practitioners.

A taxonomy of water MSPs

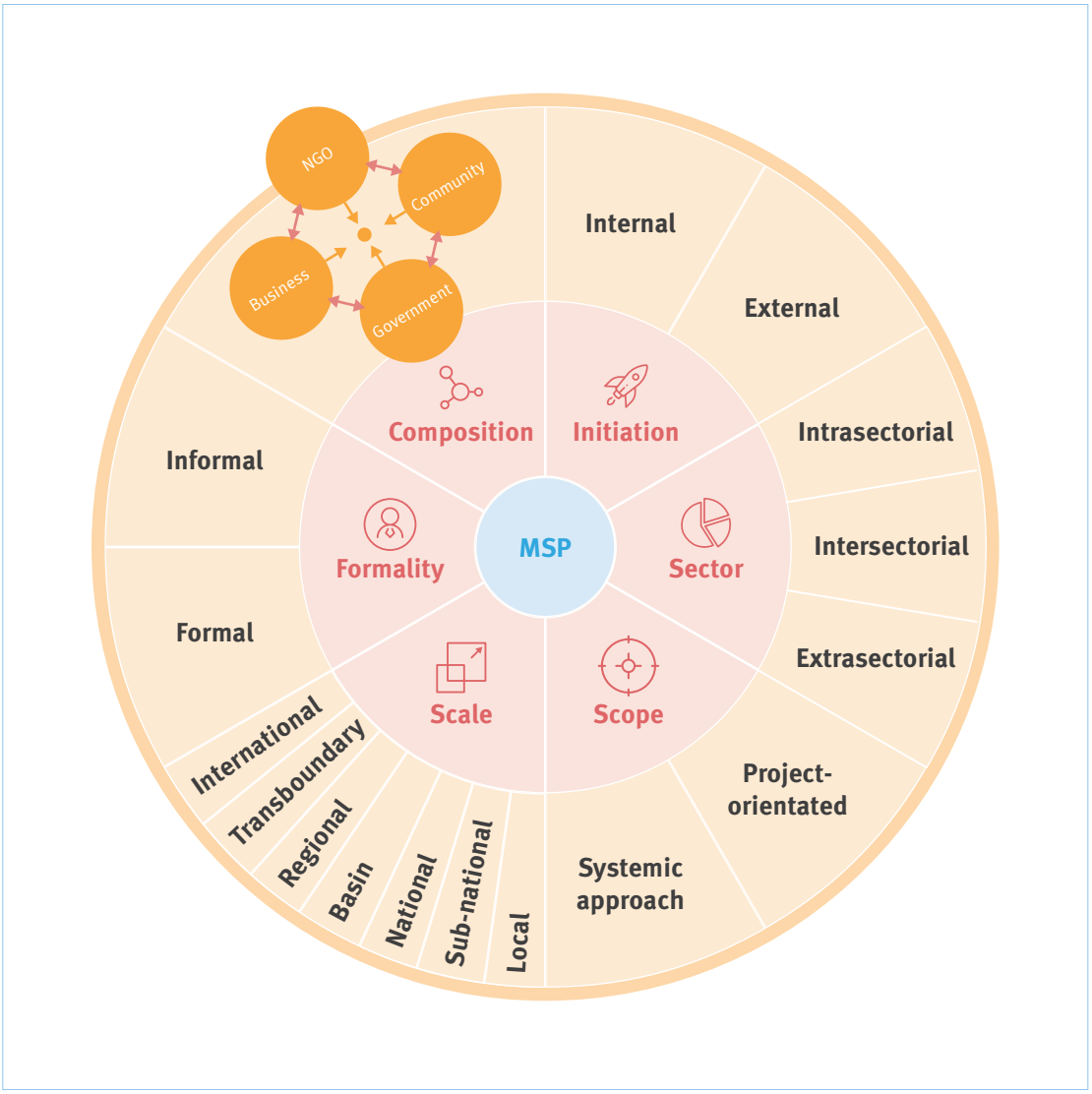
Water MSPs come in various forms with specific organisational structures and features. The United Nations Partnership Platform lists more than 800 MSPs active in supporting the implementation of SDG 6. There are various MSP taxonomies that have been developed, which can help categorise and differentiate between the different types of MSPs present in the water sector. Warner and Verhallen (2007), for instance, identified structure, content, and context as three basic criteria to classify MSPs. Building on this taxonomy, we propose six specific criteria to differentiate between different types of water MSPs (Fig. 1).

The six criteria are:



MSPs are dynamic, and are capable of undergoing change and transformation as these criteria (or their relative weight) change over time.

Figure 1. Taxonomy for water MSPs. Source: created by the authors.



Composition

The structure of an MSP is defined by the types of actors and sectors involved, as well as the relationships between them. Some examples include:

- **Business—non-governmental organisation (NGO) partnerships:** A not-for profit entity enters into a relationship with a business. For example, the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] and Mars Incorporated signed a Memorandum of Understanding to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, including the issues of water scarcity (Natawidjaja et al., 2015), while GWP-Med and Coca-Cola collaborated on non-conventional water resources (GWP-Med, 2022; Antonakopoulou et al., 2017).

- **Public—private partnerships:** Private sector participation in delivering public services involving shared risks and responsibilities (e.g. New Cairo Wastewater Treatment Plant; the Manila Water Concession).

- **Research and scientific partnerships:** Research and development are central to this type of partnership (e.g. International Association of Hydrogeologists; the Lake Chad Basin Research Initiative; International Water Management Institute; Towards Transcultural Transparency research partnership).

- **Community-based partnerships:** Civil society actors come together to manage a problem, e.g. Associations d'Usagers de l'Eau Agricole (Agricultural Water Users' Associations) in Morocco; Water Users' Association on old agricultural land and Water Users' Union (WUU) on newly reclaimed land in Egypt (Hassabou and El-gafy, 2007).

- **Partnerships between business actors:** Initiatives that mobilise diverse business actors and involve stewardship activities (e.g. the CEO Water Mandate).

- **Partnerships between State entities:** Initiatives that serve as apex coordination platforms among various governmental entities responsible for various aspects related to water resources management (e.g. Intersectoral Steering Committee of Antigua and Barbuda, Nepalese Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, Kazakh Interagency Council on Water Resources Management).

Initiation

All MSPs need to start somewhere. An MSP may be initiated in several ways:

Internally initiated: An MSP may be initiated by one of its members. It could start with a few initiators within civil society or NGOs raising awareness about an issue and mobilising a wider stakeholder group (Brouwer et al., 2016). For example, the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation was co-founded by several NGOs in the water sector to work together to find solutions for resilient water resources management.

Externally initiated: An external actor (for example, a donor or other facilitating organisation) may initiate a participatory process to form an MSP. In some cases, this process may be driven by financing or programme-specific interests. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) initiated a participatory approach for big water resources projects in the Global South (Asian Development Bank, 2004).

See Chapters 2 and 3

In both cases there is a need for an initial 'spark' to start an MSP. Creating or catalysing this spark is discussed in **Chapters 2 and 3**.

Sector

Depending on the goals they set and how they operate, MSPs may involve different sectors – and stakeholders may not all come from the water sector.

- **Intra-sectoral:** Players collaborating within a particular subsector of water management, including but not limited to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), irrigation, peace and security, gender, youth, or anti-corruption (e.g. Sanitation and Water for All; Sustainable Sanitation Alliance; WASH Agenda for Change; Global WASH Cluster;

Rural Water Supply Network; World Commission on Dams; International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage; Women for Water Partnership; Water Youth Network; Water Integrity Network).

- **Intersectoral:** Players involved in collaboration that do not belong to the same subsector of water management (e.g. collaboration between 'WASH' and 'irrigation' or 'flood management' and 'hydropower').

- **Extra-sectoral:** Collaboration between players within the water sector and those outside of it, such as between the 'water' and 'nature conservation' sectors or between the 'water' and 'health care' sectors (e.g. Water and Climate Coalition, The One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC: Learn); The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security; ThinkNature Platform; WASH and neglected tropical disease (NTD) partnerships).

Scope

MSPs may have a different scope of work depending on the nature of their desired interventions. MSP scope can also depend on whether the problem addressed by the MSP is short-term or continuous:

- **Project-oriented:** When an MSP is convened to deliver a particular project or initiative, such as fixing a specific problem or exploring a given opportunity together (e.g. a consortium of NGOs to bid on a WASH project funded by an international donor). These MSPs generally have a beginning and an end.

- **Systemic approach:** When MSP actors engage with each other on a continuous basis to solve ongoing problems. GWP, for example, focuses on the way water is managed across sectors and levels to reach an integrated approach to a systemic water problem. These MSPs may not have a particular end point, but rather evolve over time.

Scale

MSPs exist at different scales, which reflect the context in which they operate. These include:

- **Local:** Association of Community Organisations and Providers of Public Water Services and Sanitation in Colombia; Area Water Partnerships in Pakistan

- **Sub-national:** Ontario Conservation Authorities, North Eastern Regional Institute of Water and Land Management

- **National:** GWP's Country Water Partnerships; French Water Partnership; German Water Partnership; MSPs in Tanzania; Australian Water Partnership

- **Basin:** Murray-Darling Basin Authority; Baikal Commission; MSP for the Hindon River Rejuvenation

- **Regional:** GWP's Regional Water Partnerships; African Ministers' Council on Water; Asia-Pacific Water Forum; South Asia Water Initiative

- **Transboundary:** Mekong Basin MSP; South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI); International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the Republic of Kazakhstan

- **International:** Global Water Partnership; Cap-Net; World Water Council; International Water Association; International Water Resources Association; Alliance for Water Stewardship; 2030 Water Resources Group; International Network of Basin Organizations.

Degree of formality

The way in which MSPs structure their operations varies a great deal. It is helpful to consider whether the level of formality of the MSP you are involved in is suited to the problem you seek to solve. Allowing for a certain degree of generalisation, this can be summarised as follows (Dore, 2007; Warner, 2006):

- **Formal:** Highly organised, having formal decision-making or formal negotiating mandate (e.g. French Agences de l'Eau [Water Agencies]). This can include a formal membership list and member responsibilities.

- **Informal:** Consultative/advisory MSP, an unrestricted social group where participants have more space to explore options and propose workable agreements. For example, the Yakunchik MSP in Ayacucho, Peru was developed voluntarily in the context of post-(drought) disaster conflict resolution, not as a formal executive body (Warner and Oré, 2006).

The degree of formalisation of your MSP should not be confused with the degree of institutionalisation: MSPs that are not directly embedded within governmental processes and institutional structures can still present a high degree of formality. Whether an MSP is anchored within the structure of the State will depend on its ambitions and the local political-institutional context.

Some MSPs are strongly anchored within government institutions, being either hosted by governments or counting government actors as members. Others are intentionally formed for and by non-State actors. It is important to consider how your MSP is connected to formal authorities, as this strongly affects the scope and mandate of the MSP. For instance, MSPs as knowledge platforms help gather a wide range of information and insight, and a range of perceptions of a problem. These are very helpful in thinking about the nature of the problem and its potential solutions. However, while thinking about a problem and learning together can be helpful in building joint understanding, sometimes a fight or push is needed to get or keep the process moving forward ('powering'). It is therefore important that actors wielding legitimate political and/or moral authority are on board to make things happen. In the water sector, this is likely to include a public sector authority.

What makes an effective (water) MSP?

The aforementioned typologies show that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to collaboration in the water sector. However, research and experience show us that there are some basic aspects of effective and long-lasting MSPs:

- **Inclusion:** All key stakeholders holding essential resources and affected by the issue should be involved in/represented in the MSP (Stibbe and Prescott, 2020). This helps promote legitimate and shared decision-making. When they adequately consider inclusion, MSPs have the potential to build on and promote the emancipation of actors who were previously powerless or excluded (women's participation in decision-making is one of the Dublin Principles). Importantly, inclusive processes should be explicitly recognised and accepted within the MSP (Mena and Palazzo, 2012).

- **Adaptive management and capacity:** Policies and practices should adjust to changing circumstances, as well as allow for flexibility (Brouwer et al., 2016).

- **Ownership of the partnership:** A sense of ownership goes beyond inclusion; meaningful involvement of stakeholders in all phases of the project cycle helps empower an MSP (ElDidi et al., 2021; Warner, 2016). This in turn fosters sustainable change, independent of external pressures.

- **Power balance:** Procedural fairness is important in MSPs (Mena and Palazzo, 2012). This can be achieved by neutralising the power differences in decision-making structures and settings, for example by using language and technology that levels the playing field (Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2004). Equal collaboration between all the actors involved can help fill power gaps. This can also strengthen trust-based relationships and transparency. On the other hand, power can be utilised positively as a leverage to achieve change (Brouwer et al., 2016).

- **Embracing systemic change:** Change happens through collective action underpinned by a common vision, with sufficient alignment of interest while leaving space for reasonable disagreement (Brouwer et al., 2016). Systemic change is not something that MSPs can pursue alone. They can, however, keenly monitor ongoing change processes (social, political, technological, etc.) and decide which shifts to ignite or encourage.

- **Knowledge sharing:** All major stakeholders should be aware of the process and issues at stake, and any knowledge generated by an MSP should be shared with members and with external audiences. Collaboration fosters a process of learning by doing, as well as mutual learning by drawing lessons from one another's past experiences.

- **Funding and resourcing:** For an MSP to sustain itself over time, it is crucial to build a sustainable financing strategy backed up by partners (Ratner and Smith, 2020).

- **Dialogue:** Communication reduces possible information asymmetries and helps include perspectives that had not previously been contemplated (Ratner et al., 2022). This is especially important in cases where opposing views meet. This can include intercultural dialogue, which builds trust among stakeholders by recognising different cultures and traditions.

- **Dealing with conflict:** Conflict and conflict management are inevitable aspects of any MSP (Brouwer et al., 2016). Conflict can also be a powerful incentive to create an MSP (Warner, 2007). Negotiation and other techniques can be employed to approach conflict to generate win-win outcomes and social learning.

Ingredients for effective water MSPs

Looking at the previous list, the sourcebook proposes six ingredients as a roadmap to effective water MSPs. We explore each of them in different chapters:

Ingredient 1 – Context analysis: This chapter explores how to assess water challenges through the lens of MSPs, and how MSPs can be analysed and established in a practical manner.

Ingredient 2 – Setting an agenda for change: This chapter shares concepts and tools around making change through collective action, from a conceptual level down to hands-on project development.

Ingredient 3 – Knowledge management: This chapter examines how knowledge can be shared and leveraged between multiple organisations within a water MSP.

Ingredient 4 – Resource mobilisation: This chapter examines how different financing mechanisms and modalities for partnership offer opportunities for resourcing MSPs and the water sector.

Ingredient 5 – Effective communication: This chapter focuses on the importance of effective communication in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes towards encouraging meaningful participation and effective decision-making, and stimulating joint action by stakeholders who often have divergent interests and opinions.

Ingredient 6 – Conflict management: This chapter explores conflict management and the principles of negotiation by addressing common challenges that water MSPs face – both internally and externally.

Ingredient 1

Context analysis

Every MSP exists in an 'ecosystem', which is the environment in which the platform and the actors within the platform operate. Understanding how a water governance regime works requires identifying the key social and hydrological elements and how they interact with each other. It is crucial to examine this ecosystem in an intentional way to understand who and where you are as a platform/partnership. This helps determine what might be your scope of action and agency.

In this chapter, you will learn how to assess your water governance context, stakeholder environment, and policy ecosystem, and how you might strengthen both your platform and your position in that context.

Key questions

- How do water governance systems function?
- Who to mobilise and partner with?
- How to assess your position within a policy context?

Tools and concepts

- Integrated Water Governance Framework
- Stakeholder Analysis Matrix
- Social Network Analysis
- Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis
- Stakeholder Profile Matrix
- Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)
- Multiple Stream Framework (MSF)
- Institutional Analysis and Development (AID) Framework

How do water governance systems function?

Policies with Relation to Water Resources

An MSP for water management exists within a water governance context. Before establishing your MSP, you will need to consider what will enable your platform to function well, and any challenges you and your partners might face. Therefore, you must first scope out the environment, including the state of water management, the **policy context**, and other aspects (e.g. social inclusion and other challenges). Before getting into analysing the stakeholder and policy context, and analysing the positioning of your MSP in that regard, let us first consider some of the basics about how water governance systems function.

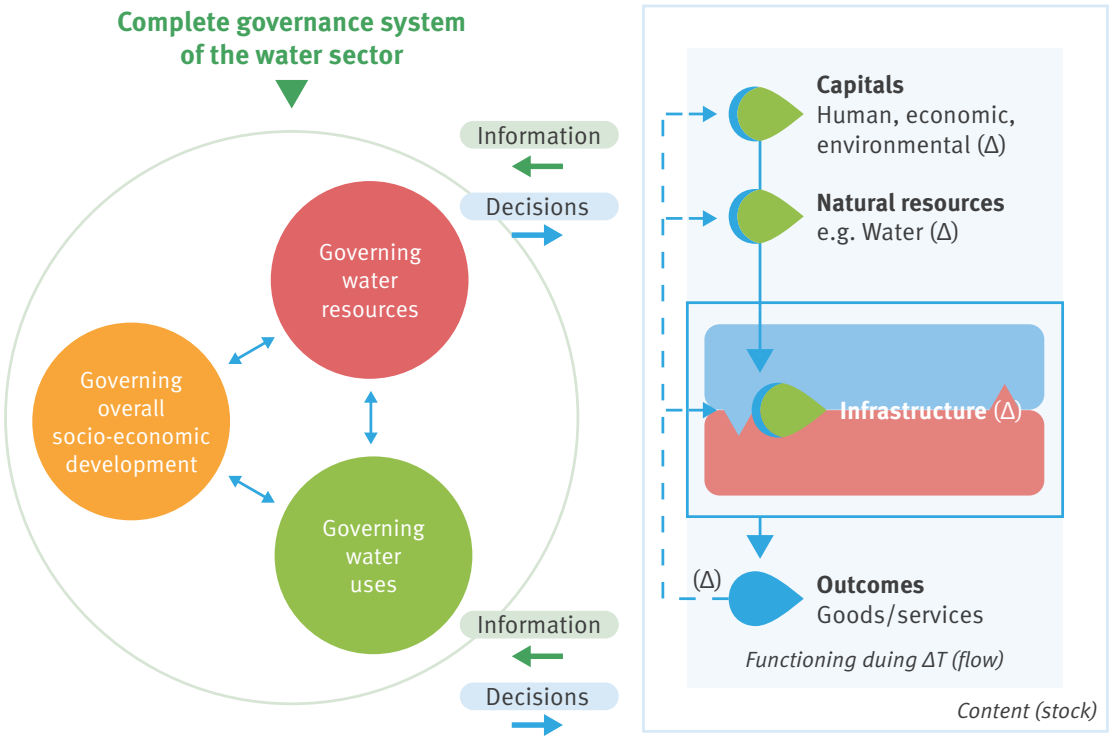
Integrated Water Governance Framework

Socio-Hydrological Modelling

Think about the building blocks of the water governance system you are part of. The first thing that probably comes to mind are the actors you interact with that are involved in taking decisions related to water resources management. But what about the water resources infrastructure and physical elements? How do you see the interaction between these **social and hydrological elements**?

The Integrated Water Governance Framework can help you to unpack how human and physical systems are interconnected, and how they both impact the governance of water resources (Fig. 2). The physical system (the rectangular component on the right of the figure) is composed of elements such as the natural water resources endowments, human and infrastructure capital, and the services that these physical systems provide. Imagine an irrigation scheme and focus purely on the technical and physical aspects: the scheme is composed of a reservoir which collects rainfall and runoff water resources, distribution channels and sluices, and the secondary and tertiary channels with pumps which bring water to the fields.

Figure 2. Unpacking elements of water governance systems. Source: Rey (2022).



The functioning of this physical system, however, depends on how water-related actors make decisions. There are three main types of actor:

- **Actors that make decisions relating to the overall socio-economic development:** e.g. regional economic commissions, regional banks, government, ministries of planning, finance, economic development, provincial councils, municipalities, urban planning departments.

- **Actors that govern water resources:** e.g. transboundary organisations, ministry of water resources, river basin agencies. These actors set the boundaries of water resources management by taking decisions, for instance, around sectoral allocation and regulatory conditions.

- **Actors that govern water usage:** take decisions about the use of the resource itself (water ministry officials, WASH service providers, irrigation committees, households, etc.).

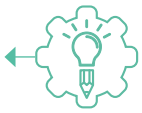
Going back to our previous example of the irrigation scheme, the management of the physical system will depend on a variety of actors operating from the three perspectives: the finance ministry that allocates funds for irrigation infrastructure and services (socio-economic development actors), the ministry of agriculture that defines the allocation and permit regulations (governing water resources actors), and the irrigation officers and farmers who operate the sluices and pumps (governing water usage actors).

When establishing your MSP, it is crucial to conduct a mapping to understand which actors you will be working with, and what interaction you will have with the physical elements of water governance. That mapping is a first step in understanding the role your MSP will play in the system. It will also help you identify gaps and policy areas where partnership-based approaches can bring the greatest benefit.

Who should you mobilise and partner with?

An MSP is composed of multiple actors interested in a common problem or aspiration, but who have different interests, motivations, stakes, and power resources to bring to this shared challenge. In some (but not all) cases, it is possible to choose which actors to invite (or not invite) to an MSP. If you are forming a new MSP, or assessing who should be part of your existing MSP, it is helpful to examine these actors systematically, taking into account their vulnerabilities and advocating for social inclusion.

Stakeholder mapping – identifying who's important

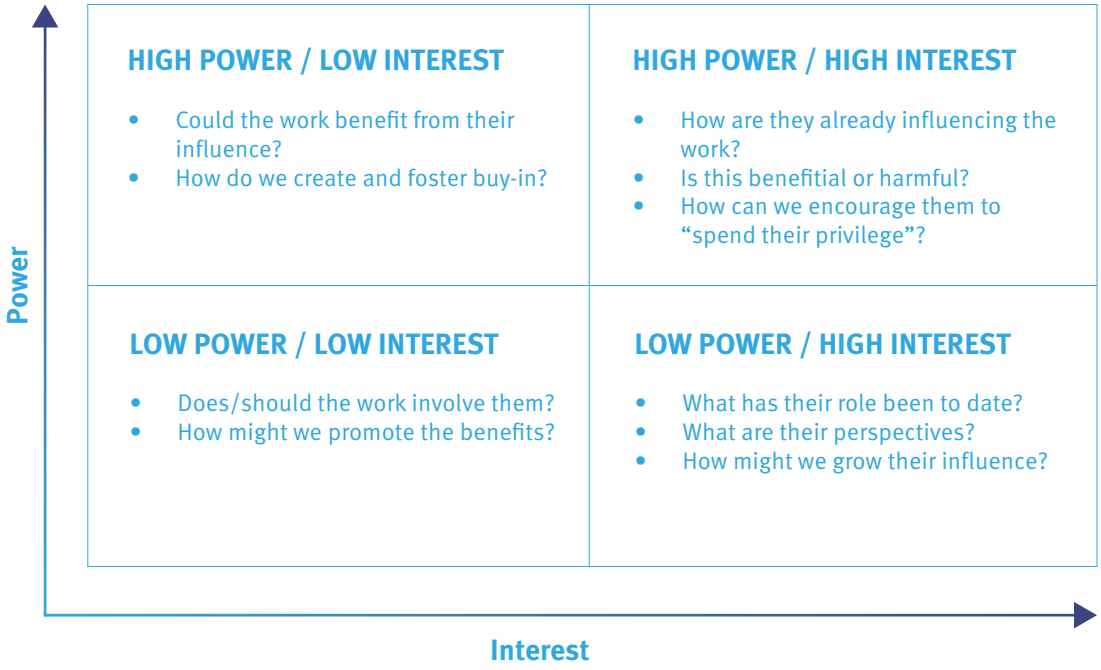


Before critically appraising actors involved in your MSP, it is useful to map all the potential players to see the 'stakeholder universe' you are dealing with. You can use an **interest-influence matrix** to categorise and the stakeholders you have mapped (Fig. 3). Mobilising players with a lot of power ('high power') and interest ('high interest') should be your priority, as they can influence others to take action. Those who have high power and lower interest might need some convincing to join (think of political allies or financiers whose support you will need to implement your water-related project).

Stakeholder Analysis

On the other side, those with low power and high interest might need some additional support from you. Beware of the tendency to ignore those actors with high interest but less political or financial capital, as these are often the ones who really want (and need) change to happen, and can help if given the right opportunities or resources (Box 3). Take a look at each of the four segments identified and think of a tailored approach to bring them on board, keeping in mind the resources you have to do so.

Figure 3. Stakeholder analysis matrix table. Source: Essential Needs Task Force (2018).



Box 3. Enhancing stakeholder mapping through interdisciplinary techniques

Led by a consortium of German universities and aquatic research centres, the TRUST project adopts an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to potable water use, safe sanitation, and water reuse to support the achievement of SDG 6 in water-scarce regions.

Through a participatory assessment, local evaluation criteria were identified and incorporated into concept development. Bringing together upper and lower basin stakeholders in a multi-stakeholder workshop, active stakeholder interest, continuous and/or recurrent engagement of local stakeholders, researchers, and NGOs, shared problem awareness, and comparable boundary conditions were critical to the transfer of an integrated technique related to hydrology, geochemistry, sociology, culture, education, urban water management, and so on.

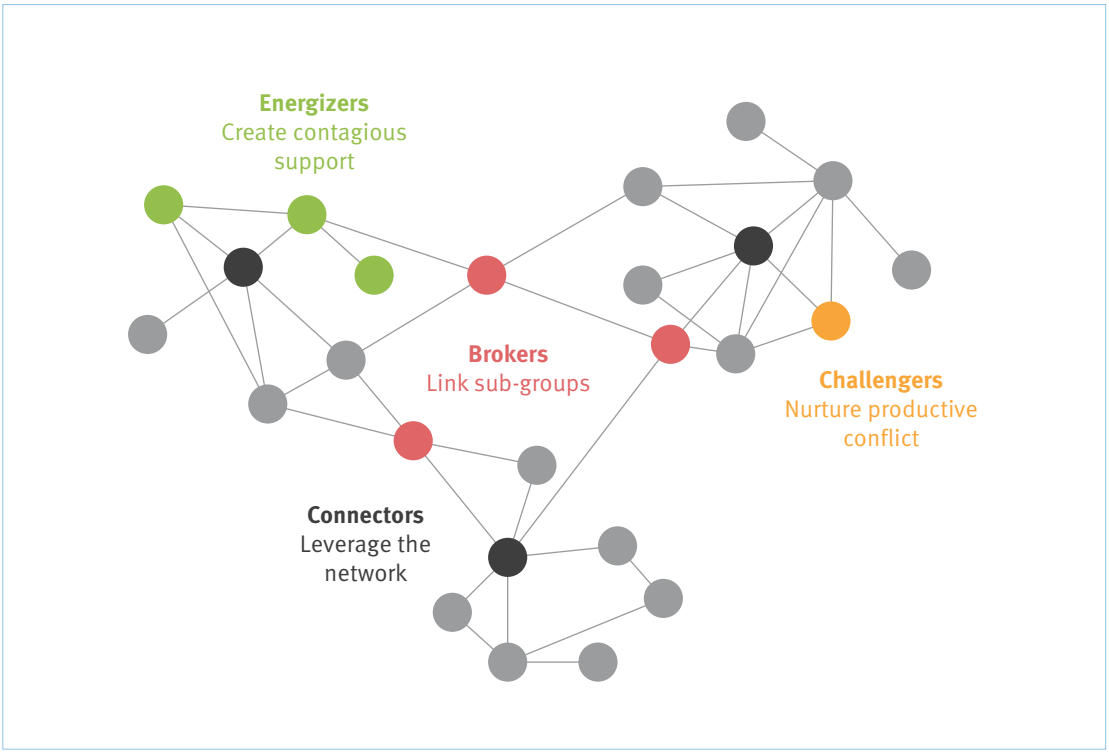
The TRUST project is a good example of how stakeholder mapping techniques can be enhanced by using interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches.

Source: León et al. (2021).

Social network analysis – who is connected to whom?

Diverse individual actors or organisations from different segments identified by your MSP form networks, reflecting how resources and information flow within them. Network analysis is a tool that can help you grasp who the most influential players are, who performs 'bridge work', and how resources circulate (Fig. 4). It can also help you assess why collaboration exists between certain actors and what the barriers are for sparking collaboration between the others.

Figure 4. Social network analysis. Source: Cross et al. (2019).



Social network analysis characterises networked structures in terms of 'nodes' (individual actors, people, or things within the network) and the ties, edges, or links (relationships or interactions) that connect them. An actor occupying a network node has more opportunity to influence the health of the network, act as a connector, maintain relationships, and diversify collaborations. At the same time, actors on the periphery should not be disregarded as they are the ones bringing new information, resources, and perspectives, as well as promoting innovation by bridging to other networks.

Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis – ensuring marginalised actors are included

Along with peripheral or 'behind the scenes' actors, there are under-represented actors who might be water users affected by water policies to which your MSP is contributing. They may face barriers to join, including lack of decision-making power at different levels, lack of rights and access to crucial resources, lack of economic power or access to loans, higher levels of time poverty, and disproportionately higher vulnerabilities to risks such as health problems and natural disasters.

Conducting a Gender and Social Inclusion **(GESI) Analysis** can help you reflect on inclusion and exclusion in your networks. The GESI-Assessment Ladder Scale assesses your stakeholder engagement processes based on five steps (Fig. 5):

Gender Analysis

1. **GESI Unequal:** Perpetuates gender-based and other forms of inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms. An MSP that works within existing unequal power structures without questioning them is, by definition, considered to reinforce inequalities.

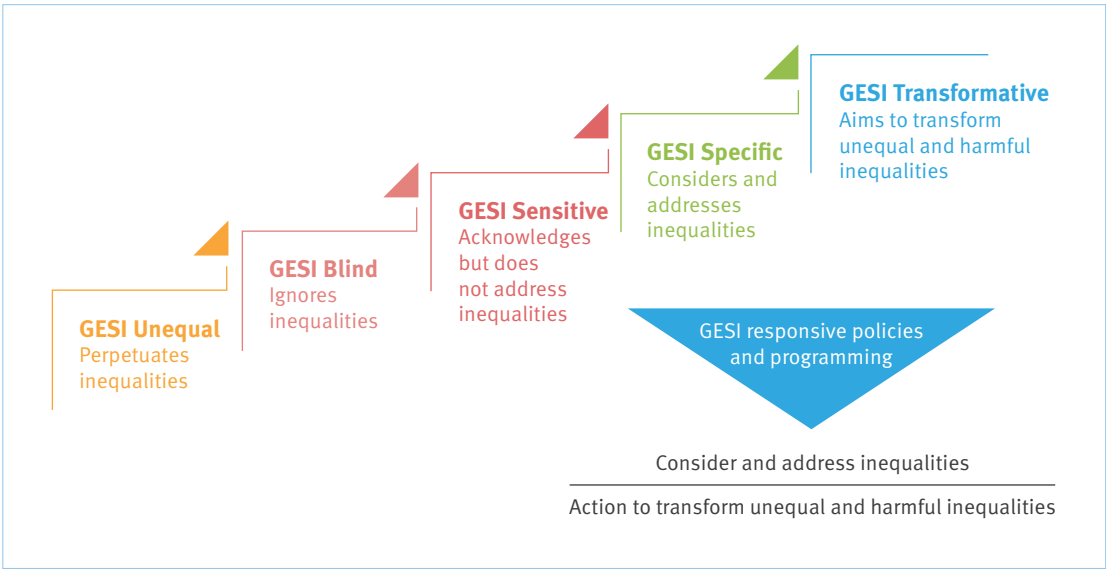
2. **GESI Blind:** Does not consider gender-based and other forms of inequality. MSPs that do not perform Gender and Social Inclusion Analyses as part of their stakeholder mapping processes fall within the GESI blind category at best.

3. **GESI Sensitive:** Considers gender-based and other forms of inequality, but takes no action to address it. This includes MSPs that conduct GESI analysis, but do not take any further action.

4. **GESI Specific:** Considers gender-based and other forms of inequality and takes action to address it, but does not change underlying power relations. MSPs that include women, youth, and other traditionally disadvantaged peoples in their intervention but do not question the existing relationships beyond the scope of their intervention are at this level.

5. **GESI Transformative:** Addresses the root causes of gender-based and other forms of inequality by transforming norms and relations. MSPs that consider GESI processes in a holistic manner and take action on the basis of their findings are considered transformative.

Figure 5. GESI-responsive assessment scale. Source: UK PACT (2021); Morgan et al. (2016).

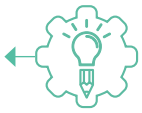


Depending on the assessment results, consider involving your MSP in GESI mainstreaming by providing voice, choice, and control to women and marginalised groups. GESI mainstreaming in water projects may include:

- Integrating gender and inclusion into the design, implementation, and monitoring of water projects and programmes
- Systematically taking women's and marginalised groups' differentiated needs, knowledge, experiences, and priorities into account in all water-related responses
- Ensuring women's and marginalised groups' meaningful participation, access to, and influence over decision-making on water at all levels, including ensuring that the challenges they are facing can be addressed and the barriers removed, such as those pertaining to **policies**.

Gender and Water Policies

Stakeholder profile card matrix – interacting with different MSP actors



Having identified who is important, how actors relate to each other, and how to address issues of exclusion and inequality, a stakeholder profile matrix can be developed to further learn about your stakeholders and how to develop differentiated strategies to engage with them. The stakeholder profile card matrix allows you to define segment attributes to your stakeholders based on key criteria including (Metropolitan Group, 2020) (Table 1):

- **Opportunity:** Do these stakeholders have the opportunity to act, and can they take targeted actions aligned with your MSP goals?
- **Ability:** Are there barriers to action?
- **Motivation:** Are their interests aligned with your MSPs? How interested are they and what arguments are convincing them to join you?
- **Leverage:** Does this stakeholder group have what it takes influence others to act or join the MSP?

Table 1. Stakeholder segment profile matrix[2]

Segment (who?)			
Action(s) we want them to take			
Opportunity and ability to act			
Relevant core values			
Driving motivations/ needs			
Barriers/obstacles			
Pathways			
Leverage	Who influences them?	Who influences them?	Who influences them?
	Whom do they influence?	Whom do they influence?	Whom do they influence?

2 Source: Adapted from Metgroup (2020).

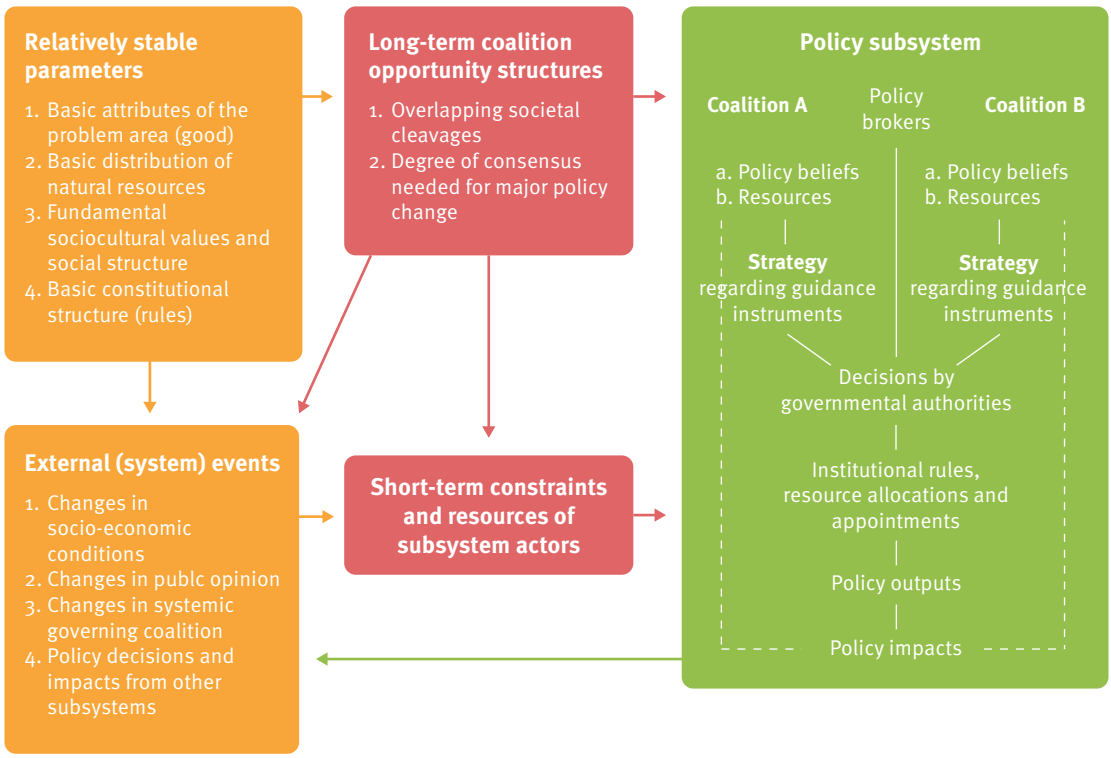
How can you assess your position within a policy context?

Water governance policy-making processes can be difficult to understand and map out. Here are some key frameworks and models to help you situate your MSP within the broader policy context and its actors. We recommend that you read the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) if you are interested in how coalitions are formed and can influence policy developments. The Multiple Stream Framework (MSF) is particularly useful for those of you wishing to understand how policy windows are created. Finally, we encourage using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework if you are interested in understanding the relationship between the biophysical environment and policy-making.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The ACF is a model that can help you visualise where your MSP stands within a complex policy-making system (Fig. 6). The ACF suggests that policy actors who share a common belief or aspiration will come together to form a coalition, which then often opposes other coalitions (Weible and Sabatier, 2009). This opposition and interaction between coalitions takes place within what is called a 'policy subsystem', which is essentially a subset of a policy domain specifically devoted to a certain issue. As these subsystems operate within the wider policy-making environment, they should not be considered separate from the broader socio-economic and political conditions and movements.

Figure 6. The Advocacy Coalition Framework flow diagram. Source: Cairney (2019).



Changes in the policy subsystem can happen in many ways. First, a coalition of actors may get better at arguing for its beliefs and become more convincing than others. Second, a new policy decision may be prompted by an external event, such as changes in socio-economic conditions or in constitutional structures. Third, coalitions may enter into a negotiated agreement, often facilitated by a third-party policy broker (Cairney, 2019).

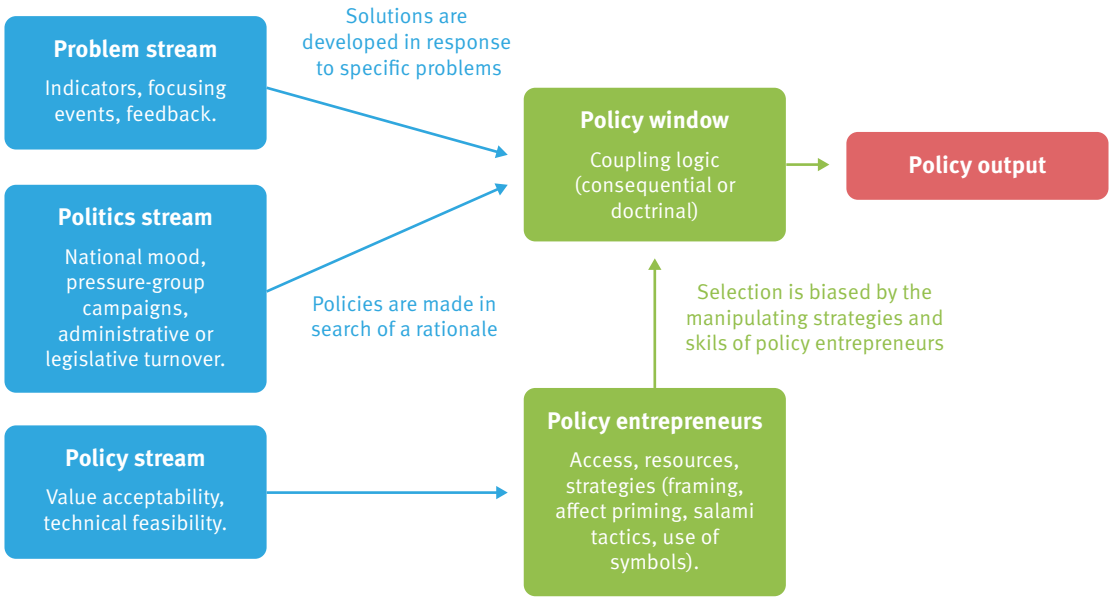
The water governance policy-making environment comprises a multitude of subsystems where actors tend to naturally come together to advocate for certain positions. Faced with virtually any water-related policy issue (such as dam removal, adoption of nature-based solutions, water service tariff setting, etc.), you will almost always encounter a diverse group of actors that mobilise and form coalitions to advocate either for or against a policy proposition. As

such, the ACF model is one way to think about water MSPs, seeing them as policy coalitions. At the same time, water MSPs can also act as brokers between coalitions. Consider a basin or national-level consultation committee that helps opposing coalitions (say, industrialists and farmers) discuss options for water resources allocation that can satisfy both parties.

Multiple Streams Framework

The MSF developed by John Kingdon (1998) is another model that can help you understand and situate your MSP within the water policy environment. One of the main notions of the MSF is the idea of 'policy communities', which are composed of specialists who share a concern or view on specific issues in a given policy area. These policy communities are composed of actors that are both inside the government (civil servants, members of the legislature, etc.) and outside it (mass media, academics, interest groups), with some actors more visible than others.

Figure 7. Multiple Streams Framework. Source: Zahariadis (2019).



According to the MSF model, 'policy entrepreneurs' are the main drivers behind policy shifts. These entrepreneurs deploy different tactics to frame the problem and try to convince others of their policy proposal. Like the ACF model, MSF highlights the importance of the broader sociopolitical environment and public opinion (even on what appears to be a highly technical policy problem). 'Policy windows' open when entrepreneurs manage to couple the problem and political streams, demonstrating that the solution they are proposing is both effective and rational.

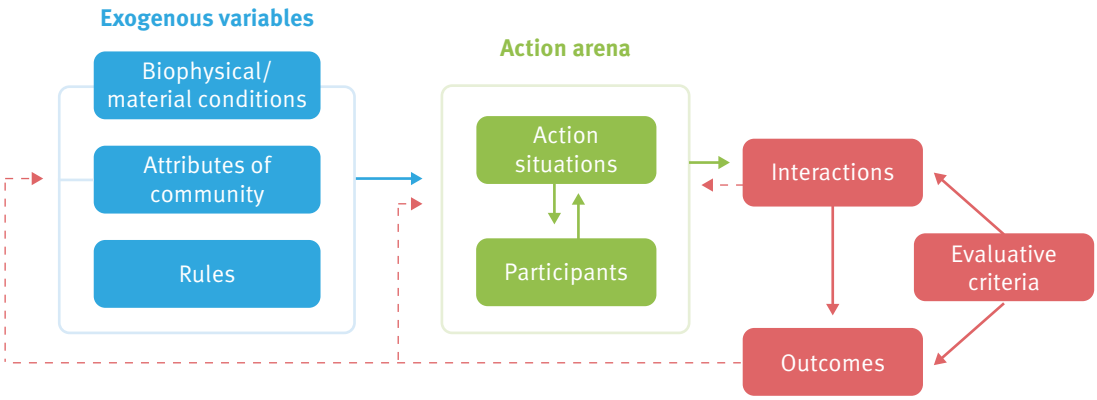
Water MSPs can play a role as policy entrepreneurs help push for specific policy reforms and action. Take, for instance, the policy debate that revolved around recognising water as a human right in many countries such as South Africa and India. In South Africa, one of the most significant policy debates took the form of a court case on minimum guaranteed drinking water supplies, which pitted residents of Mazibuko against the City of Johannesburg (Jansen, 2008). To support the residents, a multi-stakeholder coalition was formed and coordinated by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies of the University of the Witwatersrand and the Pacific Institute. This multi-stakeholder coalition successfully managed to ensure that the municipal water policy and practices complied with the minimum guarantee of 50 litre per person per day. From the perspective of the MSF model, the MSP reframed water as a public rather than economic good and mobilised the human rights groups, thus successfully coupling the problem and politics streams towards a new policy outcome. We will return to policy entrepreneurship in the context of pushing for radical change in **Chapter 2.**

See Chapter 2

Institutional Analysis and Development Framework

The IAD Framework developed by Elinor Ostrom is another model that can help you visualise and understand different elements of your water governance policy environment, and to see how your MSP can both affect and be affected by the existing system (Ostrom, 2009). This framework is a multi-level conceptual map to explore how institutional structures and supporting arrangements interact and create different governance outcomes (Fig. 8). The IAD Framework assumes that complex collective action problems, such as those pertaining to the management of common-pool resources such as water, can be divided into 'action arenas'. An action arena consists of various actors who play different roles and hold their own positions on a given problem.

Figure 8. Institutional Analysis and Development Framework. Source: Ostrom (2009).



Policy shifts and outcomes depend on the interplay at the action area level, which is itself dependent on: "(1) the rules used by participants to order their relationships, (2) the attributes of the biophysical world that are acted upon in these arenas, and (3) the structure of the more general community within which any particular arena is placed" (Ostrom, 2009, p. 16). Once these exogenous variables and the actors as well as their positions are known, the IAD Framework can be used to analyse and also predict policy outcomes. Thinking of where your MSP sits in a given action area can help you understand more about its scope, mandate, and potential to generate change.

Institutional analysis might seem theoretical, but it can be very helpful in assessing what the possibilities are for your MSP, and where your MSP can (or should) intervene. It can help show where an MSP might fit into the broader landscape of water challenges, existing governance, and existing patterns of interaction. MSP actors are affected by exogenous variables, which define the context within which action can happen. An MSP constituted of the actors with competence in river water quality, for instance, will be affected by the environmental conditions of the river as well as the existing legal framework around the river.

See Chapter 3

Similarly, when thinking about the position of your MSP within its policy context, think about: the resources your MSP brings to a situation; the values your MSP assigns to actions; the way in which actors within the MSP acquire, process, retain, and use knowledge (see **Chapter 3**) and; the processes an MSP uses to select particular courses of action (**Chapter 2**).

See Chapter 2

Takeaways

Here are some takeaways about how to analyse the water governance context and best situate the MSP within existing stakeholder ecosystems and policy environments:

- Analysing the context around your MSP is crucial to help you understand where and how your MSP can best work.
- Consider how interested stakeholders are in your shared water problem, and how they relate to one another.
- Make sure not to miss behind the scenes actors: groups that may seem vulnerable or powerless can have power too.
- MSPs can simultaneously affect and be affected by their policy environment.
- Everything is connected, so ensure that your analysis is dynamic and is revisited over time; even the boundaries may be constantly renegotiated.

Ingredient 2

Setting an agenda for change

MSPs are formed to work collectively on a problem, with the aim of generating or fostering positive change. This chapter shows concepts and tools around making change happen through collective action, from the conceptual level down to hands-on project development. Making a plan for change in the water sector requires not only a sound theory of change, but also the mobilisation of resources and allies to make this change happen.

This chapter covers questions such as: What should we consider when planning to make a positive water governance change? How do we strike a balance between aiming high and being realistic when choosing the type of change suitable for an MSP? How can we ensure that the impact an MSP seeks is attainable and sustainable?

Key questions

- What is water governance change?
- What type of change are you aiming for?
- How can you design a theory of change?
- How can you plan to implement and evaluate your theory of change?

Tools and concepts

- Quadrants of change
- S- and X-shaped transitions
- Theory of Change
- Problem and solution trees
- Logical frameworks
- Political entrepreneurship for disruptive change
- Ex ante analysis
- IWRM Framework for benchmarking

What is water governance change?

Defining positive water governance change

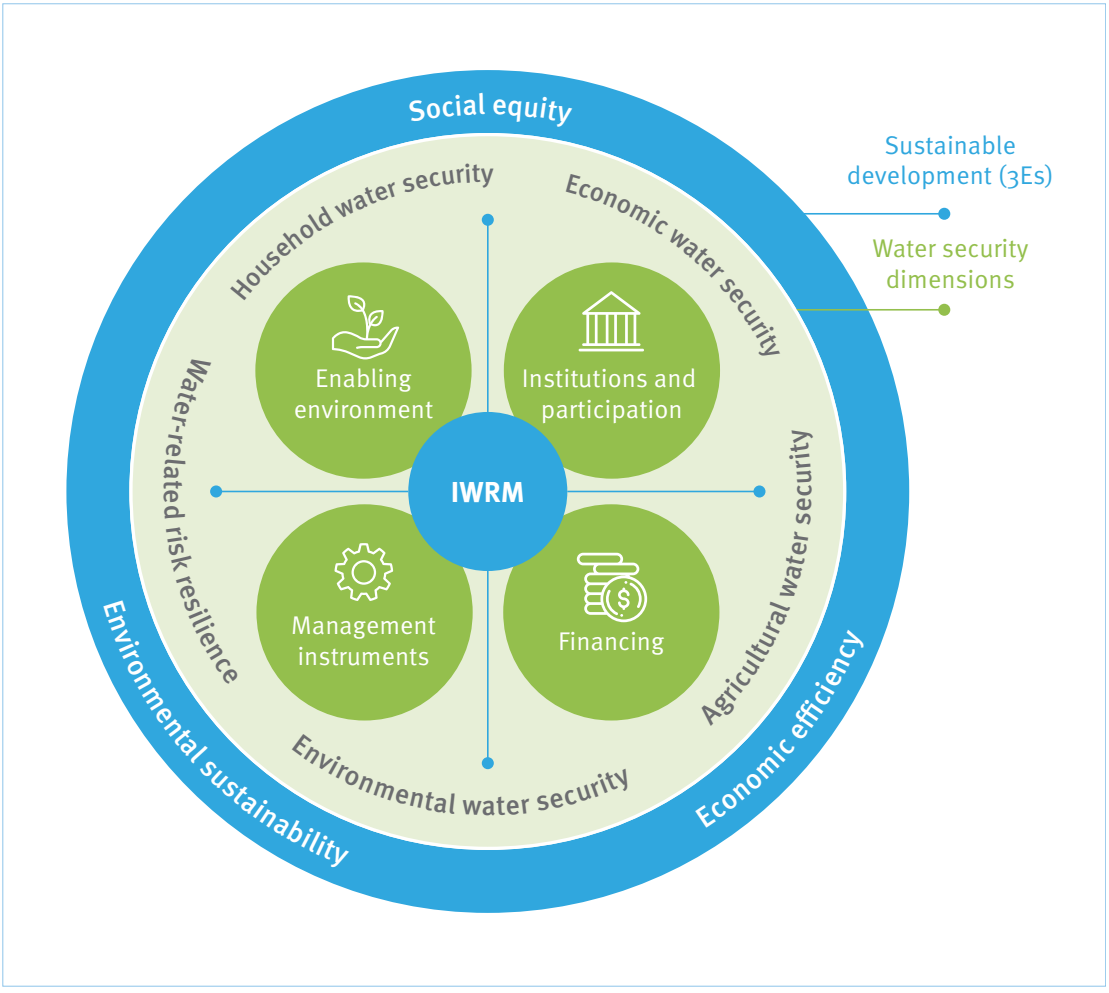
Many water MSPs aim to trigger positive water governance change. This inevitably raises the question: what is considered positive governance change? According to Miller (2020), a positive governance change brings us closer to achieving sustainable human development via increased economic productivity and growth, overall socio-economic well-being, as well as environmental sustainability (also known as the '3Es' or the 'triple bottom line' in business terminology).

These are not possible without water security, which has several dimensions, e.g. agricultural, economic, household and environmental water security together with water-related risk resilience (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Aligned with the 3Es, water security can be defined as the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development; for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters; and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability (UN-Water, 2013). A water-secure world means ending fragmented responsibility for water and integrating water resources management across all sectors, thus requiring diverse stakeholders to be involved.

IWRM Explained

To support the above, **IWRM** offers a framework to catalyse water governance towards achieving the vision of a water-secure world, as well as sustainable human development. The framework will be elaborated in the **final section of this chapter**.

Figure 9. IWRM Framework for Water Security. Source: GWP Toolbox IWRM Action Hub (2022).



What type of change are you aiming for?

What is the water governance problem you are trying to fix? What is the type of change you think is needed for that to happen? How far-reaching is the change you can and want to aim for? The higher you aim, the bigger is the risk you will meet with resistance – or apathy – from those with a vested interest in the status quo. Your MSP's ambition should be in line with the change you are envisioning.

The extent of change or innovation you want to (realistically) bring about may be limited in its scale (project level) or may have broader reach (programme level) – or you may even seek disruptive change (system level). While 'disruption' may sound negative, a radical rethink may well be urgently needed if the current state of play has become unproductive. Transformative (or sweeping) change is about doing things fundamentally differently, breaking with established models. That means disrupting thought patterns, cultural behaviours, and structures in society and technology that are taken for granted. However, transformational change is unlikely to happen as a result of one MSP's efforts. In order to broaden your impact, think of how you can find your allies (**Chapter 1**) as well as actively support positive feedback loops that tap into what people already know.

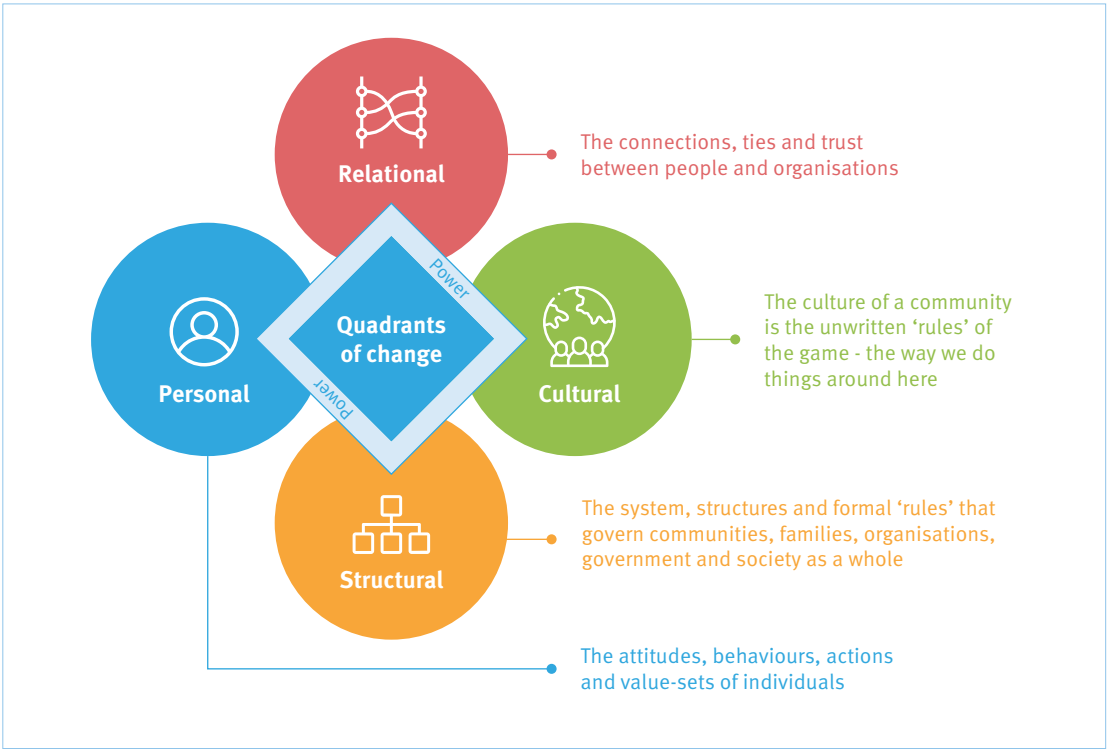
See Chapter 1

Quadrants of change

To find solutions to your identified water-related problem, you will need to consider how to trigger change at various levels. The quadrants of change is one tool that can help you categorise and visualise the type of change(s) you will be aiming for:

- **Personal quadrant:** changes in intention, personal identity, and ways of perceiving
- **Relational quadrant:** changes in behaviour and how it is developed
- **Structural quadrant:** changes in culture, beliefs, and values
- **Cultural quadrant:** changes in the structures and processes of social systems.

Figure 10. Dimensions of change: Transformation from personal to systemic change. Source: Inspiring Communities (no date).



As a starting point, we may consider the quadrants of change to assess how the change we seek may affect and be realised, from the personal to the systemic level. Consider what types of change are needed in each quadrant in order for your desired change to happen. Then, think about what the MSP can do to bring about these changes. What can or should other actors do within these quadrants? Change may not need to take place in all four quadrants. Further, it is worth researching what changes are already under way, even if they are not yet so visible, and to make a concerted effort push such changes forward.

You need to be aware of where change starts (or can start) from. Does change in clean water and sanitation for all start with individual commitment, or is more action expected on an institutional level (Brouwer et al., 2015)? For your MSP, the quadrants of change model raises important questions for reflection about how change happens and where to focus.

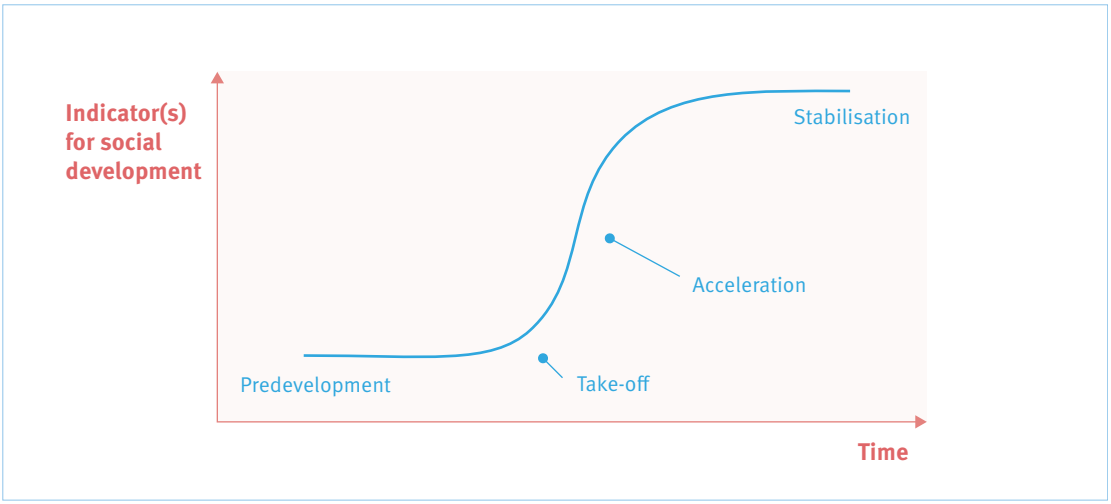
What kind of change / transition is needed?

Most of the time, change does not happen in a linear way. To be an active agent of change, it is necessary for you to think and chart out the pathway to the expected change, including the path of dependencies along the way.

See Chapter 1

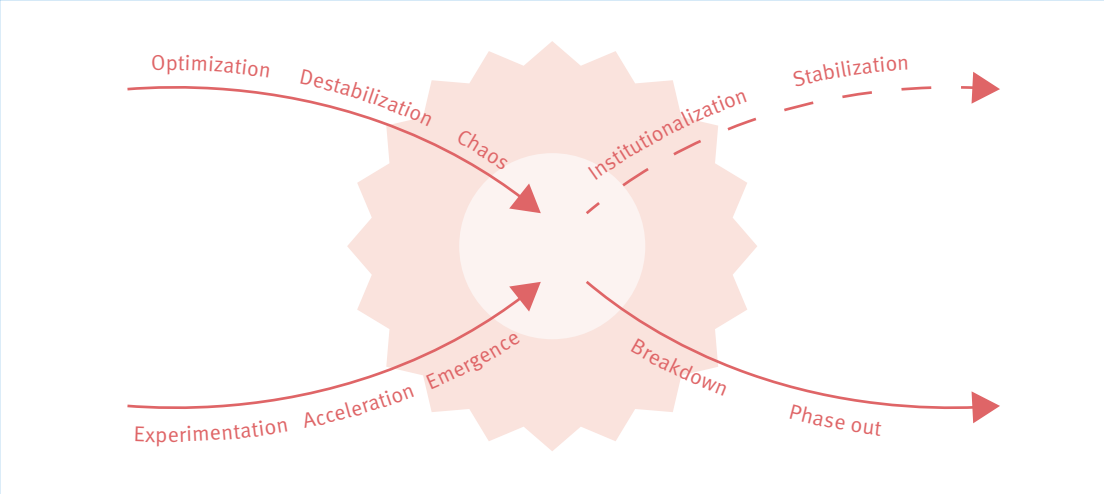
Change rarely happens in a straight line (**Chapter 1**). If we analyse transitions from current to desired state in terms of an S-shape (Rostow's take-off model), we assume that everyone is ready for change, but they need an extra push. In the case of some water problems, an MSP could help make that push. For instance, if your MSP has an innovative approach to dealing with decentralised water supply, which was previously disregarded by the public sector, this could help push stakeholders over the middle of the S-curve by eliminating cost-related or logistics-related bottlenecks.

Figure 11. S-shaped transition. Source: Silvestri et al. (2020).



However, many situations are less straightforward. When transformative change is ushered in, elements of the 'old order' need to make way. In most cases, path dependencies and resistance to change make transitions harder to engineer. Even if the 'old guard' sees the need for change and is willing to adapt, it may be hard to oversee what the new situation will mean for every actor. Thus, there may be a moment of chaos in which everything seems to be in flux and things could go either way – and there is a risk that change either will not take place, or that the situation will go in another direction. In such situations, it can be helpful to visualise the transition as an X-shape.

Figure 12. X-shaped transition. Source: Silvestri et al. (2020).



Consider which factors may take your situation into an X-shape transition (see also Silvestri et al., 2020). In the case of innovative technologies for decentralised water supply, your MSP might lack resources and infrastructure for scaling up, or meet resistance from small independent water vendors interested in keeping the status quo. When considering such pushback factors, explore what your MSP can do to mitigate them.

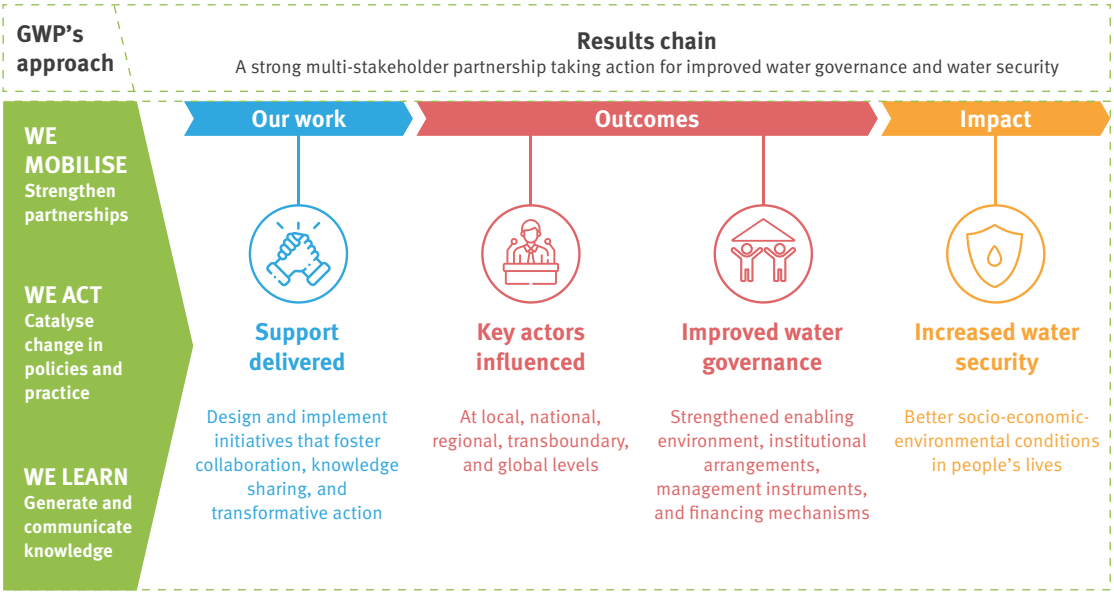
How can you design a theory of change?

Key elements of a theory of change

A theory of change (ToC) is a theory that embraces the perceived causal relations between activities, outputs, and outcomes that should lead to the desired impact. It is a hypothetical series of changes that are expected to occur in a given context as the result of the specific integrated actions (Center for Theory of Change, 2022). ToCs enhance accountability by comprehensively defining contributions that could have that desired impact. It should be a living tool that is adjusted over the years as the change hypothesis is tested.

ToCs can be represented in two complementary ways: (1) a visualisation or diagram and (2) a narrative. A visual representation of the ToC is often used as it provides an appealing overview of a project's different steps (from problem to end-goal). The visual representation of GWP's ToC is provided as an example in Figure 13. The support delivered by the GWP network is designed to influence key stakeholders who have a mandate for water governance and are instrumental in the development of key water governance outcomes. The implementation of these water governance outcomes leads to impact in terms of socio-economic and environmental benefits among the target populations through increased investment in appropriate infrastructure, empowerment of vulnerable groups, and more sustainable use of resources.

Figure 13. GWP ToC model. Source: Global Water Partnership (2022a).



Such infographics are often accompanied by a narrative form of the ToC which describes the underlying logic of a given project or initiative. An example of the narrative form of the ToC for the Water Security & Sustainable Development Hub five-year programme is provided in Box 4.

Box 4. Water Security & Sustainable Development Hub ToC

Vision: Adoption of a systems approach to dealing with water and sustainable development at the global scale (SDG 6.1 and 6.2)

Programme goal: To adopt a systems approach in the delivery of sustainable water security within the four collaboratory sites. To achieve this goal, we have identified four key outcomes across our four collaboratory sites:

Outcomes:

1. Governance and policy: Integrated frameworks for policy and decision-making that enable enhanced water security are created.

2. Management and innovations: Integrated management regimes and more equitable and sustainable water security innovations are created.

3. Community empowerment: Communities assume roles and responsibilities with respect to water resource governance and management.

4. Global and national partnerships for enhanced water security: Relationships facilitate integrated approaches to water security at the collaboratory level and/or promote these beyond the programme target areas (nationally, regionally, or internationally).

Source: Water Security & Sustainable Development Hub (no date).

Though ToCs can take many forms, the core elements are generally the same:

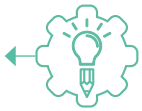
- **Problem statement:** Describes a problem, why it is a problem, and whom it affects.
- **Context analysis:** Outlines the means and allies necessary to successfully achieve impact, as well as listing contextual complexities such as culture and power relations.
- **Activities:** The concrete actions that will be taken.
- **Cause-and-effect relations:** Outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
- **Underlying assumptions and risks:** Conditions that need to exist for planned change to occur and factors that may undermine success. It is important to make these assumptions and risks explicit and test them for realism.

Steps towards a theory of change

So how do we get to the aforementioned ToC? There are seven steps towards creating a ToC (Brown, 2016):

1. Use causal analysis to create a problem tree.
2. Create a solution tree and identify pathways of change.
3. Identify your assumptions.
4. Prioritise outcomes the project will address.
5. Identify intervention outputs.
6. Transfer the ToC to a logframe (impact pathways).
7. Identify indicators for ToC components.

The following section contains some useful tools aligned with these seven steps.

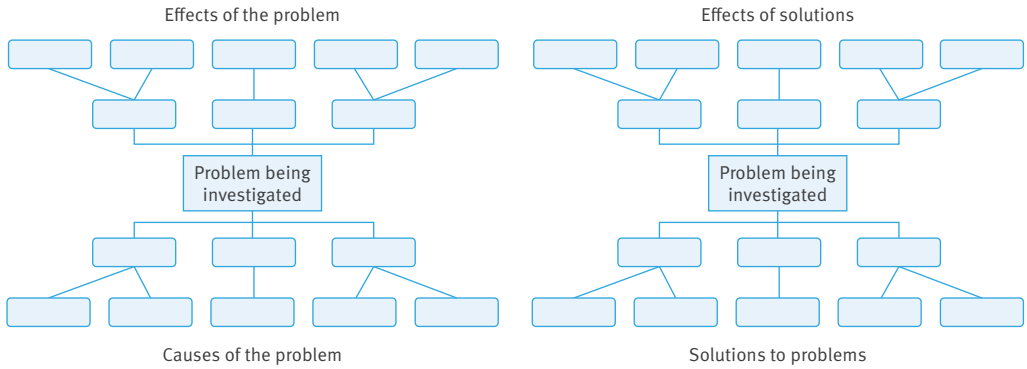


Problem definition and problem trees

Every active MSP is organised around a purpose, which is generally to solve a problem. While at times this problem/these problems can seem obvious, it is helpful to break them down: this can help us unpack any hidden assumptions and opportunities. Problem analysis can help us better see the different components of a problem, as well as how an MSP could approach them.

To test our assumptions about what change we hope to enact, and cause and effect, we can draw problem and solution trees (Fig. 14). Such trees look at the elements that generate a problem at multiple levels (the lowest-level branches constitute the root causes) and their effects, also at multiple levels. We use causal analysis to create a problem tree: a causal path of what root causes create problems, and the effects these causes have on our work. Once we have a problem tree, we want to turn these problems into solutions by drawing a solutions tree. This is not as simple as flipping a problem tree upside-down: instead, use the causal relationships outlined in the original problem tree to build a solutions tree that includes actions that are feasible. An example of how MSPs can help define problem and solution trees is provided in Box 5.

Figure 14. Problem and solution trees. Source: Snowdon et al. (2008).



Box 5. Multi-stakeholder consultations to identify WASH problems and solutions in Malawi

The Global Water Leadership (GWL) Programme in Malawi is supporting the government in developing strategies that would address three main barriers to getting poor and vulnerable people to use resilient, safely managed water and WASH services. The barriers are: low investment in climate-resilient water infrastructure and financing; lack of political will and water leadership; and weak coordination, policy enforcement, and regulation.

These key barriers were identified through a multi-layered process at community, regional, and national levels. The programme started with regional workshops in the south, centre and north of Malawi to gather views from stakeholders at the regional and district levels that would otherwise not be heard at the national-level workshop. During these workshops, stakeholders discussed their experiences of challenges faced in water resources management and WASH.

Using the water-related issues identified, the GWL Programme then worked on the ground to seek the views of community members through focus group discussions. This proved to be an innovative and effective approach to stakeholder consultation, as the challenges identified at the regional level and the case studies at the community level informed the discussion at the national level, which eventually led to the identification of the key barriers.

Meanwhile, Malawi's Ministry of Water and Sanitation has – with support from the GWL Programme – formalised the process of establishing the task forces in line with the Malawi Vision 2063 and Malawi Investment Plan I, which will develop response strategies to overcome the three key barriers.

Source: GWP-UNICEF (2022).

Logframe or project overview plan

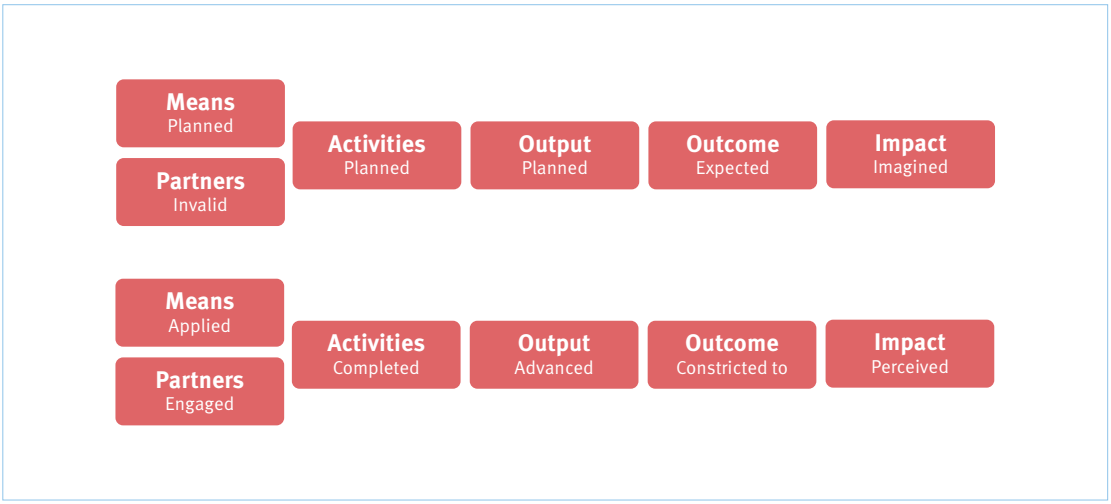
Once you have understood your ToC, you can turn it into a plan of action. For instance, your MSP may hope to create a particular change (such as a better water policy) with the aim of giving more people access to water and, as a result, improving societal health outcomes (i.e. the broader social impact). To achieve this result, you need to engage in actions that move along a causal chain that is consistent with the assumptions in your ToC. Logframes are important as they are the basis for setting up effective **monitoring and evaluation systems** for tracking project progress.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

As this broader social impact is likely to be outside your direct control, you need to reason how assumptions, outputs, and outcomes lead to impact, applying backwards thinking. The expected outcomes are what your plan wants or needs to achieve. The outputs are the (countable) actions or items that will contribute to achieving those outcomes. To produce these outputs, you will need to mobilise means and actors, some of whom will be within your network and reach, but others will not. And for your water policy intervention to have the desired impact, you need to ensure that all the appropriate actors were included in the decision-making process.

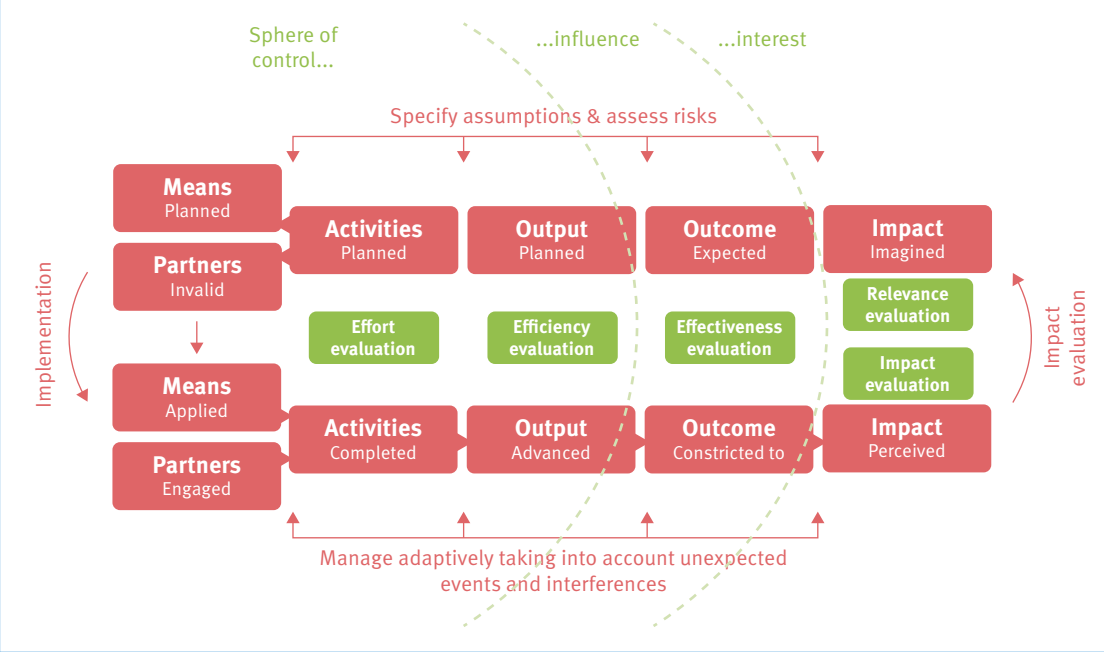
Start with laying out the current situation compared with the desired situation as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Elements of ToC impact pathway. Source: devised by K.E. Engel.



When imagining how to get from the existing to desired situation, there are elements we can control or influence, and elements that we cannot. The 'sphere of control' is something you (as an MSP or consortium) can decide on your own. These are the people and resources your MSP manages. Other aspects of the ToC might be beyond your sphere of control. Taking everything together, the framework can provide an overview of your activities, short-term outputs, medium-term outcomes, and long-term goal:

Figure 16. Project overview plan. Source: devised by K.E. Engel.



How can you plan to implement and evaluate your theory of change?

Now that you have a ToC and an overview plan, you need to implement it. The great thing about a ToC is that if you write it in a detailed and granular way, it breaks down into activities that can then be planned and implemented. The planning processes for MSP should consider not just what activities to carry out, but who to involve and when: your MSP should choose the right moment for when to involve certain stakeholders. For instance, when will you engage with the private sector? Early on or later? How will their participation influence the power balance?

Political entrepreneurship for disruptive change

To bring about transformative change, you need not only a plan, but also to mobilise allies and resources to make it happen. Furthermore, to make a major change, you won't just need a project, you will need a manifesto and a strategy to mobilise support and resources. You can refer to the Steps for Starting a Bottom-up Revolution (Hamel, 2001) to spark political entrepreneurship:

1. **Build a point of view:** Understand what is changing in the world and the opportunities this creates for your MSP. Be credible, coherent, and compelling, and do not forget to dream big.
2. **Write a manifesto:** Use it to share your ideas with others. It must capture people's attention and imagination.
3. **Create a coalition:** Transform individual authority into collective authority. Think outside existing organisational boxes.
4. **Pick your targets and your moments:** Stick with your allies and always have your elevator pitch prepared.
5. **Co-opt and neutralise:** Search for win-win propositions. Make people see you as a catalyst for change.
6. **Find a 'translator':** Find someone who shares your views and who can better communicate with influential people (**Chapter 5**).
7. **Win small, win early, win often:** Start small and think of what will constitute an early win.
8. **Isolate, infiltrate, integrate:** Turn your experiment into a reality.

See Chapter 5

Entrepreneurship and innovation have huge untapped potential in the water sector. The strategy on how to start a bottom-up revolution can be a helpful tool for your MSP to occupy this niche.

Ex ante analysis

Once you have pulled together a ToC and a plan, think about how those who will support the plan (donors, other stakeholders) will see it. Are you using too many buzzwords? Do you find your ToC to be all talk? Can it live up to its promise? Can the actors you have included actually do what you say they will do? Take a second look and give your ToC an extra reality check. Often the discourse (the buzzwords) is out of step with the material changes on the ground – running ahead or even behind.

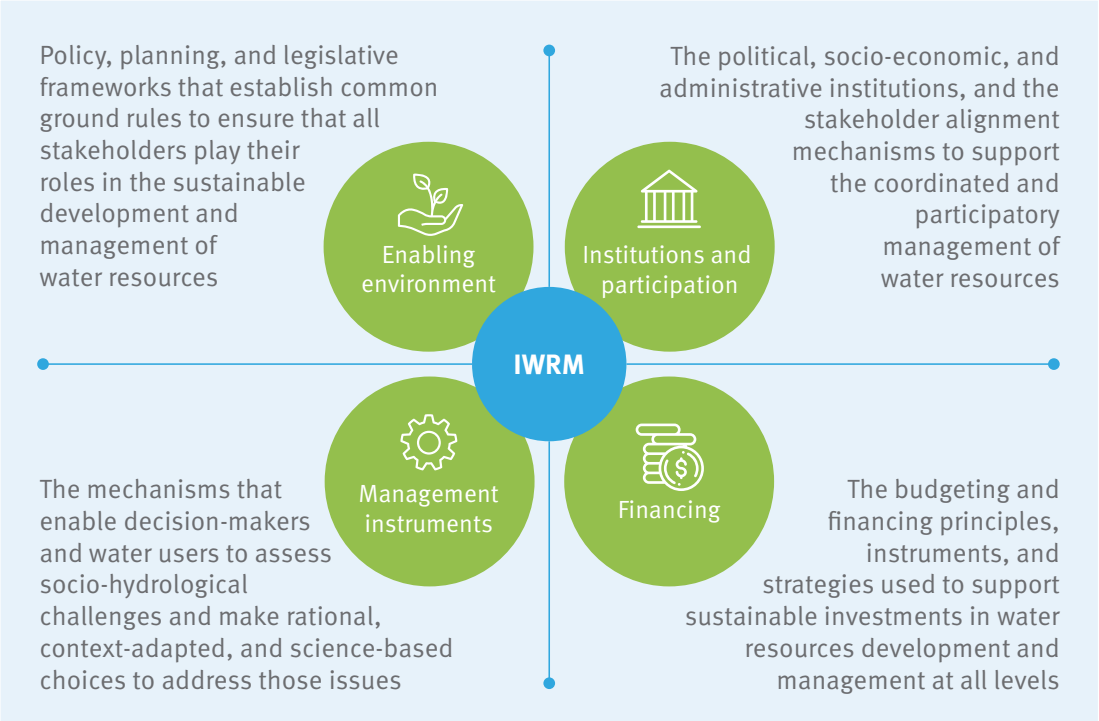
You can test your ToC by stepping into the shoes of an evaluator – both funders and stakeholders wanting change. How are they likely to encounter your proposal and the changes you envisage? Also think about validating your assumptions: pleasing everyone may be a fragile balance. You'll need to assess how bad it is if not everyone is equally happy. When seeing your ToC, it is helpful to reflect from different perspectives on 'what's in it for them'. Finally, who owns the ToC? Bring in as many relevant actors as possible to ensure they buy into the changes the MSP envisages (**Chapter 1**).

See Chapter 1

IWRM Framework for benchmarking your theory of change

The four dimensions of the IWRM Framework can be used to assess your ToC against a broader water governance systems perspective (Fig. 17). The framework is based on the following four dimensions:

Figure 17. IWRM Framework for improving water governance. Source: GWP Toolbox IWRM Action Hub (2022).



As seen in the **Introduction Chapter**, several types of MSPs are active in the water sector. While some focus on fostering water governance change through one pillar, others adopt a systems perspective and aim to work across all elements, moving away from a fragmented sectoral management style.

See Introduction

Apart from the alignment with the four pillars in Figure 17, your ToC for any water-related initiative should be benchmarked against the IWRM principles (Global Water Partnership, 2000):

- **Principle 1:** Freshwater is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development, and the environment.
- **Principle 2:** Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners, and policy-makers at all levels.
- **Principle 3:** Women play a central part in the provision, management, and safeguarding of water.
- **Principle 4:** Water has an economic value in its competing uses and should be recognised as an economic good.

Takeaways

Here are some key takeaways regarding how to best set up and implement a collaborative agenda for change in the water sector:

When triggering positive water governance change, aim high at achieving sustainable human development and water security.

Transformative change is a rare phenomenon and requires considerations at different levels. Change is rarely linear!

When designing your ToC, think backwards from the goal to the starting point. Forward loop thinking makes a ToC very activity-heavy.

Everything is connected. A plan is not the same as its implementation: continuous appraisal and adaptation is required. Make a realistic plan that can be properly evaluated.

A good ToC for any water-related initiative should help achieve IWRM. IWRM dimensions and principles are a simple yet effective benchmark for setting up your ToC.

Ingredient 3

Knowledge management

A key function of many MSPs is to generate or share knowledge – either internally, externally, or both. Knowledge management is one of the six core ingredients of successful MSPs for improving water governance. In fact, the effective functioning of an MSP depends on this. If you embed collaborative learning into the functioning of your MSP, your platform will be much more likely to adjust to changing circumstances, take into account more perspectives, and ultimately be more effective.

This chapter looks into key tools and concepts that can serve as a basis for fostering a learning culture within your MSP. It also shows the benefits of developing a knowledge strategy to turn knowledge into practice, as well as how specific knowledge platforms can help do this.

Key questions

- What is knowledge?
- How can you foster collaborative learning?
- How should you design a multi-stakeholder knowledge strategy?
- What are the key formats and platforms to strengthen knowledge exchange?

Tools and concepts

- Knowledge Pyramid
- Iceberg of Knowledge
- Experiential Learning Cycle
- Learning Loops Model
- Swiss Cheese Model
- Ritual Dissent
- Knowledge to Practice Process Framework
- Learning Alliances
- Communities of Practice

What is knowledge?

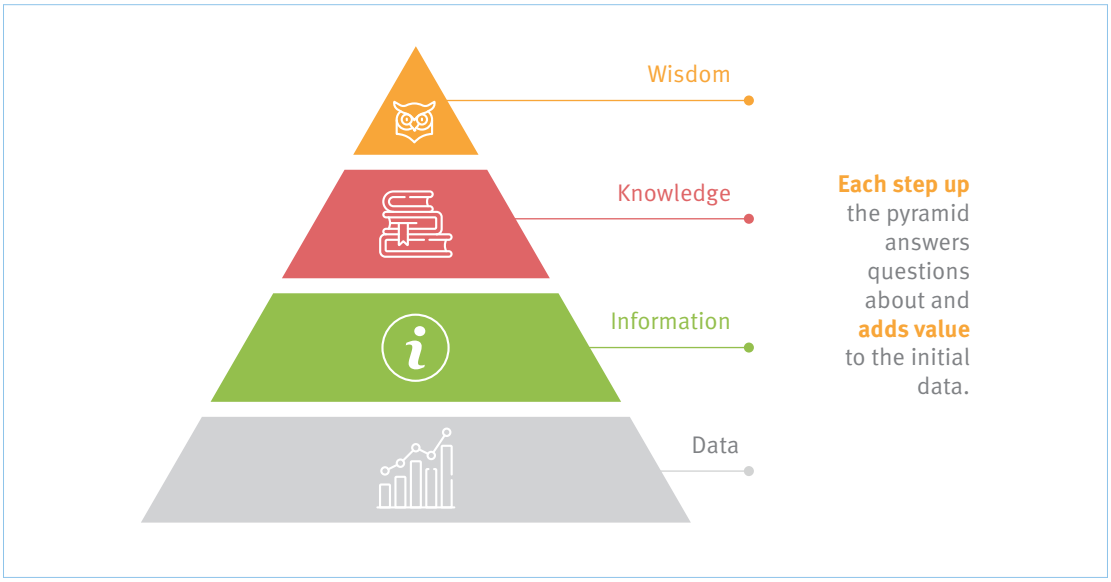
Knowledge in its complexity and variability can be understood as a common or a shared resource jointly used and managed by diverse stakeholders (Hess and Ostrom, 2005). Knowledge refers to all ideas, information, and data in whichever form they are expressed or obtained. However, a certain hierarchy exists between these notions, which is explicitly demonstrated by the knowledge pyramid concept.

Knowledge pyramid

The concept of a knowledge pyramid can help us understand that knowledge is not simply the totality of acquired information (Fig. 18). As we move up the pyramid, raw data become information, which becomes knowledge, which becomes wisdom, with wisdom being the ultimate aim. Each step adds value to the initial data. The more that data are enriched with meaning and context, the more knowledge and insights can be gained, which in turn can support better, more-informed decision-making.

Information Gathering and Sharing Networks

Figure 18. Data–information–knowledge–wisdom pyramid. Source: Baskarada and Koronios (2013).



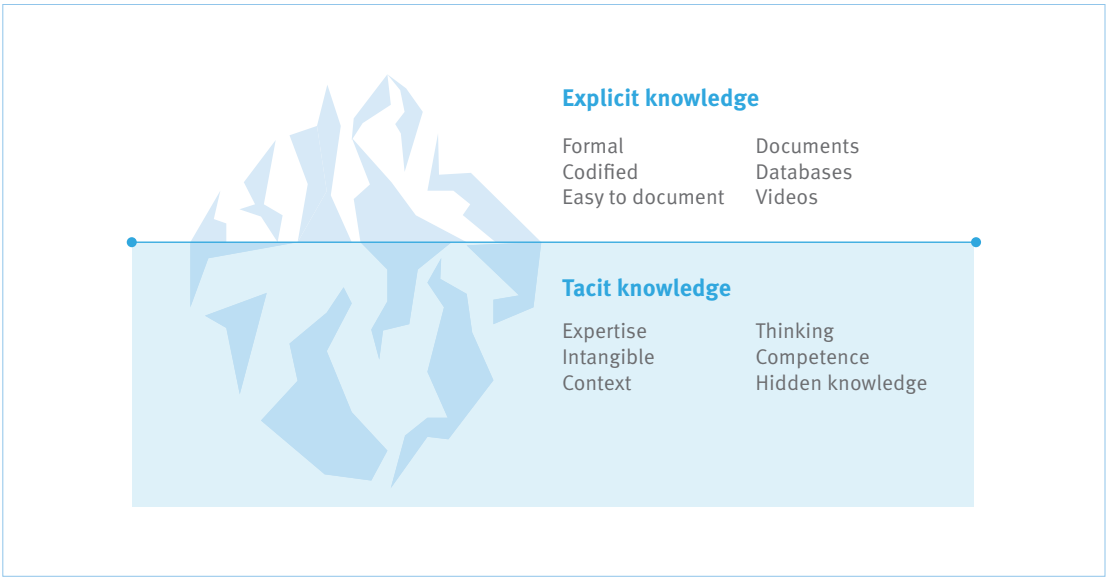
For example, quantitative and qualitative data about water resources (such as quality, volume, frequency of occurrence, spatial variability) will not have any added value for your MSP unless it is given further context. By adding contextual information such as regional or temporal comparisons, historical or policy context, or personal insights about which government decision-makers are interested in what, we can move these data up the pyramid to inform water decision-making.

Types of knowledge

Knowledge can be broken down into two types, as illustrated by the Iceberg of Knowledge (Fig. 19):

- **Explicit (recorded) knowledge:** This can include written materials, protocol, procedures, planning, control routines, and expert systems.
- **Implicit (tacit, intangible) knowledge:** Knowledge gained through experience or intuition such as cultural stories, songs, dance, or skills transmitted by example.

Figure 19. Iceberg of knowledge types. Source: López-Cabarcos et al. (2019).



Different knowledge types can be useful in different contexts. For instance, while written material is useful for documenting information or lessons learned and sharing them with a wide audience, stories, dialogues, and face-to face interaction provide a greater opportunity for participants to internalise and remember new knowledge. This can often be more conducive to sparking action.

In fact, much of what people do in practice when managing water is based on tacit knowledge in the form of experiential know-how, informed intuition, cultural (indigenous vernacular) repertoires, skills, and techniques transmitted by example or through stories and even songs, which are not always easily transmitted into explicit knowledge (Box 6). Capturing tacit knowledge can be difficult because it is something people know without even thinking about. MSPs bring together a diverse array of tacit knowledge, and one of the key benefits of a knowledge-focused MSP can be to encourage reflection and help actors put into words what they know and do, and why they know and do it.

Box 6. WASH in Wayuu community

The Wayuu are the largest indigenous group in Colombia. They live in La Guajira, one of the harshest and driest areas of the country, making access to WASH difficult. Before WaterAid, several NGOs tried to build sanitation facilities in La Guajira, but the infrastructure felt foreign, unnecessary, and overbearing, and was not well received. However, by adding art inspired by Wayuu culture, toilets became sacred spaces that reminded the Wayuu community how important water is and showed that humans and nature are one. The art connected people to WASH, with the symbols illustrating how communities can own and maintain infrastructure. This sacred art helped give the Wayuus a sense of belonging and ownership and increased their usage of WASH facilities.

Source: WaterAid (2022).

How can you foster collaborative learning?

Training Water Professionals

Learning facilitates behaviour change, which leads to broader change, such as decision-making around water. It is important to not only facilitate learning, but also encourage others to adopt a learning mindset. How do we make sure **people are open to learning** and build it into their daily work? This entails cultivating a culture of learning within and outside your MSP.

An important component of fostering a participatory learning culture lies in social relations and trust building (Hahn et al., 2006). Formal and informal space for exchange can help create situations where participants can learn from each other, build personal bonds, and gain knowledge through working relationships (Beyers and Leventon, 2021). In an environment that is conductive to learning, people know that their development, input, ideas, and contributions are valued, which encourages continual engagement and transformative action. A commitment to learning is also a commitment to acknowledging, sharing, and improving upon mistakes.

Experiential learning cycle

In their efforts towards fostering a learning culture, MSP practitioners should first think about the sequencing of their learning activities, including how to best combine informal and formal learning processes along the stages of the learning cycle. David Kolb's (1984) model on experiential learning can help us identify the various stages that are needed for full learning to take place (Fig. 20):

1. **Concrete experience:** The learner encounters a concrete experience. This might be a new experience or situation, or a reinterpretation of an existing experience in the light of new concepts.
2. **Reflective observation of the new experience:** The learner reflects on the new experience in the light of their existing knowledge. Of particular importance are any inconsistencies between experience and understanding.
3. **Abstract conceptualisation:** Reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept (the person has learned from their experience).
4. **Active experimentation:** The newly created or modified concept gives rise to experimentation. The learner applies their idea(s) to the world around them to see what happens.

Figure 20. Process of experiential learning. Source: Kolb (1984).

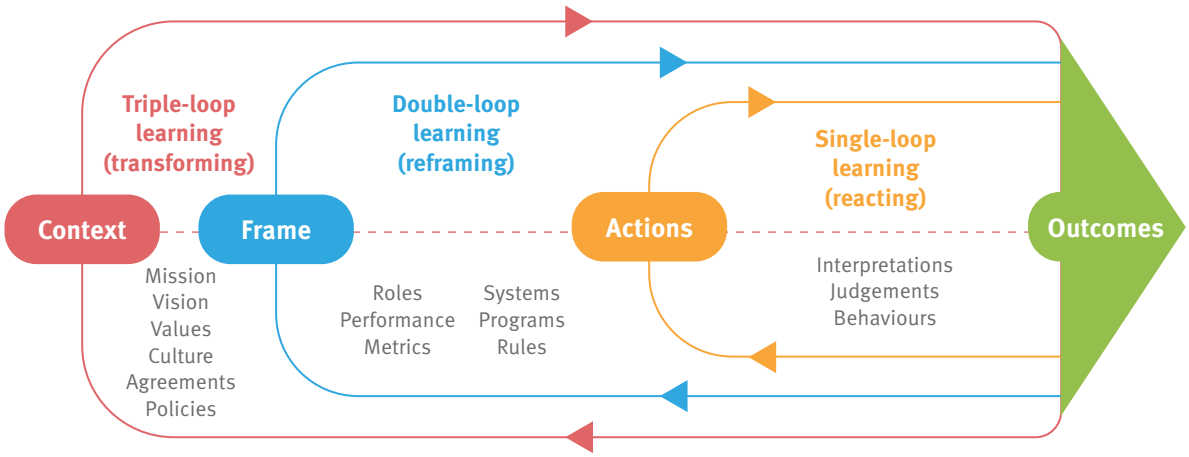
These four stages make intuitive sense – but how many of us create time for all four of these stages in the workshops, meetings, classes, and other learning activities we design or participate in? Importantly for MSPs, the way someone picks up knowledge depends on the individual: some people learn through abstract concepts, others want to feel the actual experience, and others need to reflect through observation. When designing a learning activity for your MSP, rather than thinking about the organisations involved, consider the individuals involved. Imagine them entering the space where they are comfortable and moving through the cycle of learning experience from there.

Learning loops

Another practical tool that you can apply to deepen the level of learning within your MSP is the Learning Loops Model. The idea of learning loops is simple: for learning to happen, errors need to be detected and relevant changes to tackle those errors must materialise. This may imply changes in behaviour, changes in assumptions, or even changes in structures. The model has three different levels: the single-, double-, and triple-learning loops (Fig. 21).

Single-loop learning poses the question "Are we doing things right?" and focuses on making adjustments to correct mistakes within an existing set of strategies, policies, and procedures. As a result, little or no (structural) learning or changes occur. Double-loop learning goes a level deeper, asking "Are we doing the right things?" This stimulates thinking around our assumptions, highlighting the underlying systems, programmes, and rules that may be causing problems. Triple-learning loops go even deeper, asking "How do we decide what is right?" This level prompts us to explore the values, mission, vision, and reasons upon which a given system is built (Mcintosh and Taylor, 2013).

Figure 21. Single-, double-, and triple-loop learning models. Source: Tamarack Institute (2021).



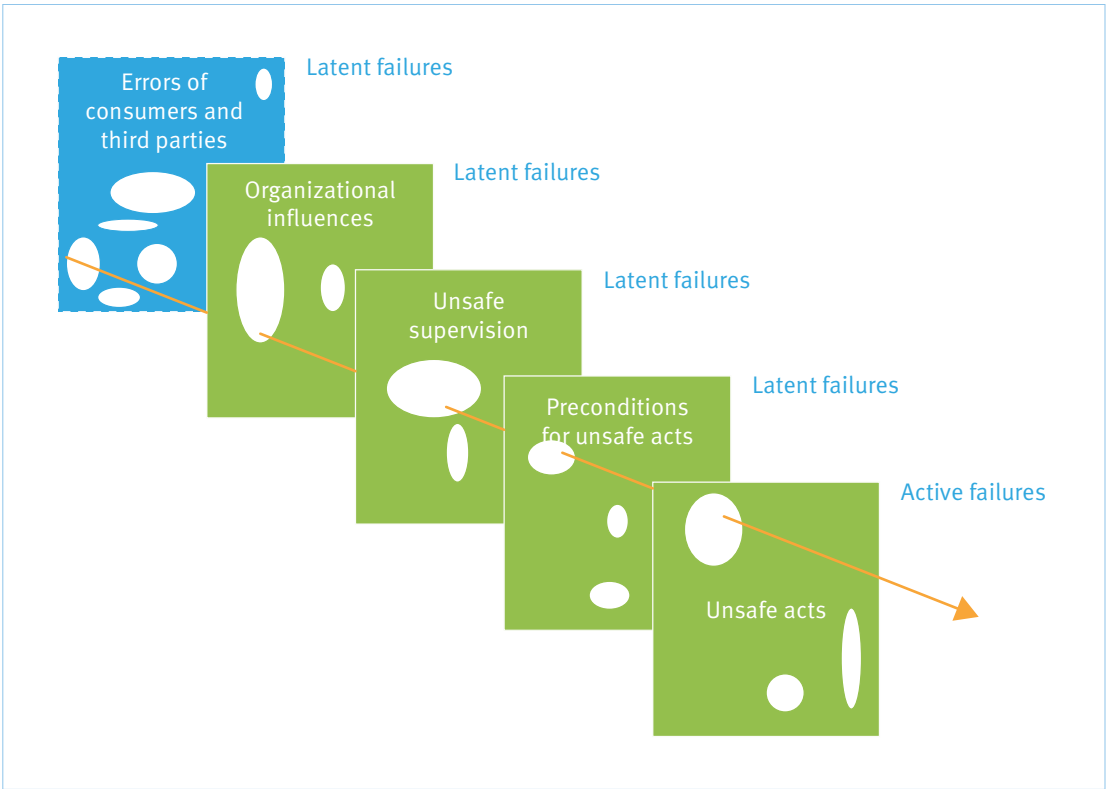
Learning loops can be applied in the context of monitoring and evaluation of your project or MSP initiative. For instance, when evaluating your programme or project, you can go back to your ToC (**Chapter 2**). The plan and intentions should be clearly written down, as well as the assumptions that govern behaviour. When this is done properly, it is easier to compare reality with 'the plan' and appraise what in fact went wrong – making sure to consider all three levels of learning loops. From there, you can see what changes should be implemented for effective learning to take place and to continue aiming for the intended consequences.

See Chapter 2

Swiss Cheese Model

The Swiss Cheese Model is another tool that can help you deepen your collective learning processes. The model uses a Swiss cheese as a metaphor to explain how failure and mishaps occur in complex systems (Reason, 2000). The model shows that barriers intended to prevent hazards tend to have unforeseen weak spots ('holes') which, if these holes align, can lead to system failure (Fig. 22). The model has been widely used to reflect on how mechanisms for pollution control and ensuring water safety sometimes fail despite the best intentions of the multiple actors who share collective responsibility in this regard (Miao et al., 2015; Oluwasanya, 2020; Wu et al., 2009).

Figure 22. The Swiss Cheese Model applies to the drinking water supply. Source: Wu et al. (2009).



The Swiss Cheese Model shows that fatal breakdowns or gaps occur not only through human errors but also through latent weaknesses, such as organisational influences, limited capacity, or lax monitoring. Breaking your MSP's various activities down into layers of responsibility can allow you and your partners to rethink your collective processes. This model shows that there is a real benefit for your MSP in fostering a culture that makes things work together, avoids these errors, and is always on the lookout for unexpected failure.

See Chapter 6

Ritual dissent

It is common for human beings to relate best to those we already agree with. However, one of the key values of an MSP is that it brings together people with different perspectives, who may not agree (**Chapter 6**). Within your MSP, consider letting dissent in to avoid 'groupthink'. The ritual dissent tool enables stakeholders to give and receive feedback in a safe environment and to review their proposals more critically (Brouwer et al., 2015). The earlier you invite the stakeholders from your MSP to a ritual dissent process, the better knowledge and experience of others will be integrated into the elaboration of a new concept or a strategy you are working on.

This exercise is most effective in the offline environment and can be planned as follows:

1. Appoint a spokesperson to give a presentation.
2. Invite a critical audience that might be external to your MSP.
3. The spokesperson presents the idea/concept. The audience does not provide comments at this stage.
4. The spokesperson turns around with their back facing the audience so that people can start providing their criticism.
5. There is time for reflection before the spokesperson turns around to share what they have learned.

How should you design a multi-stakeholder knowledge management strategy?

What are the components of knowledge management?

Knowledge management refers to the components and processes linked to creating, transferring, and retaining knowledge. In the context of MSPs, knowledge management is particularly important, as each actor that makes up an MSP holds a great deal of specific knowledge. Something must be done with this knowledge in order to leverage its value by sharing it with others.

There are three key components of knowledge management (Fig. 23):

- **People:** People are the most vital component of knowledge management as they are the ultimate holders of knowledge. Think of this component as concentric circles of audience groups in relation to your MSP (European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2008):

    1. Immediate stakeholders who are directly involved in your MSP processes (e.g. WASH practitioners contributing technical knowledge about decentralised infrastructure requirements together with consulted local communities)

    2. Broader sector audience comprising the stakeholders working in your area (government officials on a local or national level)

    3. Wider audience that might not be part of your MSP but might have potential interest or relevant expertise (broader development community). Refer to **Chapter 1** to discover useful tools for mapping stakeholders.

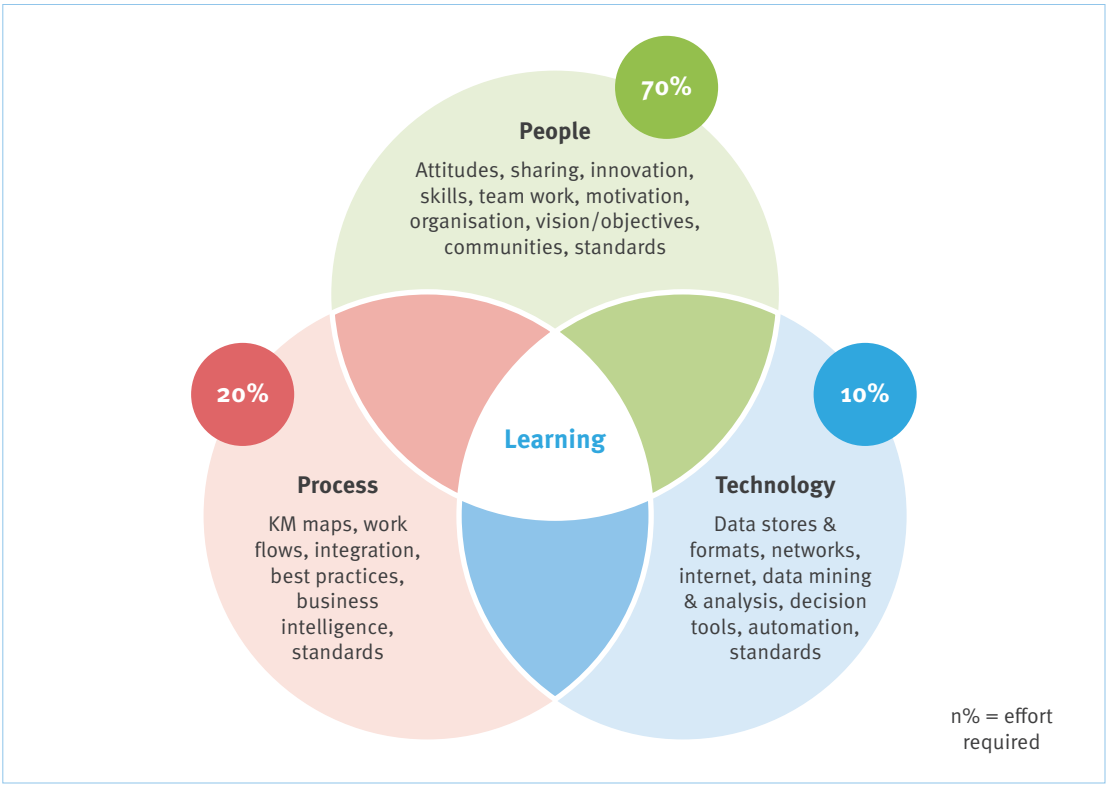
See Chapter 1

- **Process:** Knowledge management processes can be understood as the organisation, capture, use, and analysis of the impact of a group's collective knowledge. Knowledge management processes include all of the steps from knowledge creation to organisation and retention, all the way through to knowledge transfer. Knowledge sharing is an important role for many MSPs, because many knowledge gaps exist in multi-actor water management landscapes. MSPs can help ensure that all major stakeholders in a given context are aware of the processes and issues at stake, and aware of the information and knowledge that other actors have.

- **Technology:** Technology advances and speeds up knowledge management processes initiated by people. In the first stages of the data value chain – including identification, collection, and processing – technology can offer useful tools. In the context of water resources management, think of **geographic information systems** (GIS), socio-hydrological modelling, monitoring and evaluation systems, and others.

Geographic Information Systems

Figure 23. Knowledge management components. Source: Shannak et al. (2012).



Knowledge to Practice Process Framework

See Chapter 2

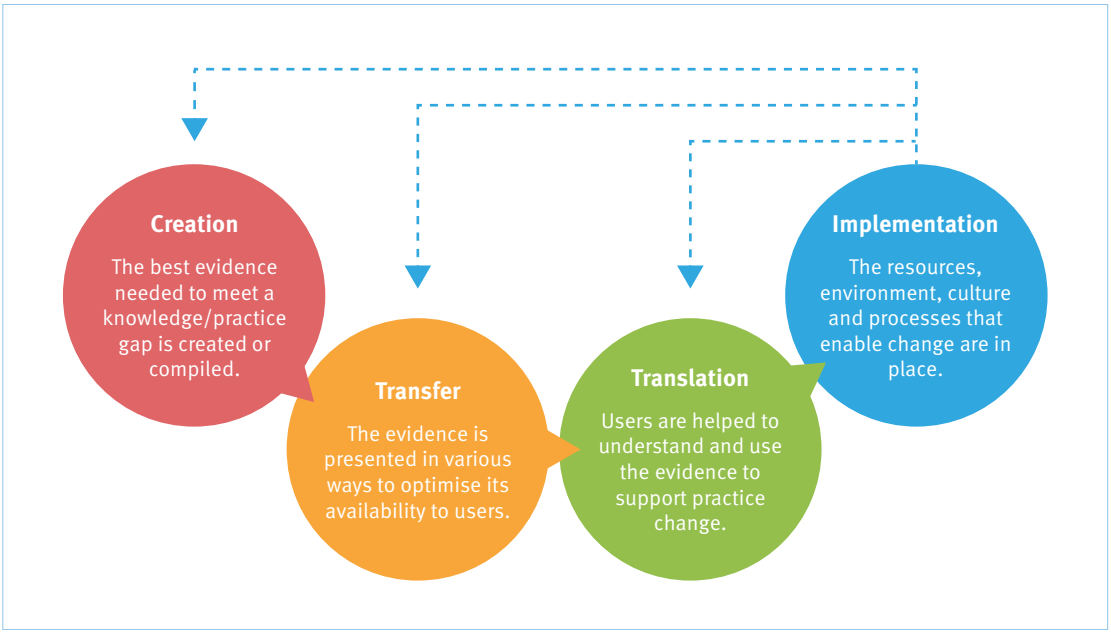
The nexus of people, technology, and process is key to developing a knowledge management strategy. The objective of a knowledge strategy is to come up with a plan to effectively manage knowledge within your MSP and put it into practice to advance your ToC (**Chapter 2**). A knowledge management strategy lays out the types of knowledge to be used, where this can be employed, and how to do so.

It is likely that knowledge already appears in your MSP's ToC: for example, perhaps better water data should lead to more timely decision-making on water allocations. Or perhaps your MSP is compiling a policy brief that is meant to raise the priority of water within a particular government ministry, which should in turn lead to a bigger budget for water management.

There is a big difference between sharing knowledge and putting it into practice. Too often, the knowledge created and shared through MSPs does not translate into behavioural change or action. All ToCs contain this link, but it is often missing in practice. For this reason, it is very important to develop a strategic plan for how learning can be applied or implemented. Use the Knowledge to Practice Process Framework to help you in this process (Fig. 24).

As Figure 24 shows, the stages are knowledge creation, transfer, translation, and implementation. The knowledge creation stage focuses on compiling the evidence needed to meet the knowledge gaps identified. In the transfer stage, the evidence is adjusted in various ways in order to optimise its availability to users. In the translation stage, users are guided to understand and use the evidence to support the practice in the framework's implementation stage. As in most stage models, the stages may naturally overlap.

Figure 24. Knowledge to Practice Process Framework. Source: Ryan et al. (2013).



The Knowledge to Practice Process Framework is a cycle, not a one-off intervention. More than one cycle may be required as you adapt to the context. Nor is the framework linear, as you may need to shift back to an earlier stage at a certain point of the process. Think of the following questions in each of the stages (adapted from Behavioural Supports Ontario, 2022):

- What is the research/best practices around the topic your MSP is involved in? Do you have expertise within your MSP or will you need to source it from outside? What are the tools and resources available?
- Who is your target audience; in other words, who needs to know this information? Are the materials at your disposal easily used or should they be adapted? Are you using multiple methods to transfer the information?
- How can the 'educators' within your MSP be utilised to make sure that the audience understands the information? How can informal influencers (community leaders) be engaged?
- What implementation barriers exist? What are the possible solutions? Have you considered unintended consequences? How will you address the issue of sustainability as your MSP is interested in sustaining the change?

When planning to put the knowledge available into practice, it is recommendable to consider also the absorptive and retentive capacity of your members and think of a long-term strategy to retain the knowledge within the MSP. Building a strong culture of collaboration and continuous improvement and learning usually helps build solid grounds for successful knowledge transfer and retention.

What are the key formats and platforms to strengthen knowledge exchange?

Formats and platforms for strengthening knowledge management

MSPs differ widely in their formality and ways of working, and as such have different ways of turning knowledge into action. It is important to reflect on whether your MSP has a conducive knowledge platform within or beyond itself. You can think of different types of knowledge platforms as organisational formats for your MSP.

Information Gathering and Sharing Networks

Learning alliance

Learning alliances are designed to break down barriers to both horizontal and vertical **information-sharing**, and thus to speed up the process of identification, development, and uptake of innovation. The concept is based on the premise that innovation can only be approached in an integrated manner, bringing together diverse stakeholders, such as policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, and activists in the water sector. The critical concepts that should constitute the core of every learning alliance are knowledge, information, and innovation (Moriarty et al., 2005). Examples of water-related multi-stakeholder knowledge and action research networks that have taken the form of learning alliances are provided in Box 7.

Box 7. Examples of multi-stakeholder knowledge and learning alliances in the water sector

- **The AIC Urban Water Learning Alliance**: connects researchers, leaders, and 'water champions' to share their experience and expertise and shape a water-sensitive future for the city of Bogor, Indonesia
- **Alliance for Water Stewardship**: global membership collaboration platform comprising businesses, NGOs, and the public sector offering training and advice on how to engage in water stewardship
- **AfriAlliance**: brings together African and European professionals with water and climate knowledge and expertise to work jointly towards developing implementable ideas and solutions
- **Sustainable Sanitation Alliance**: a knowledge-centred network of partners and individual members who share a vision for sustainable sanitation and aspire to achieve SDG 6
- **The Sanitation Learning Hub**: with its partners, aims to support progress on area-wide sanitation and coverage in particularly challenging contexts such as poverty and marginalisation, entrenched attitudes and social beliefs, tough physical environments, and fragile contexts and lifestyles/livelihoods

Community of practice

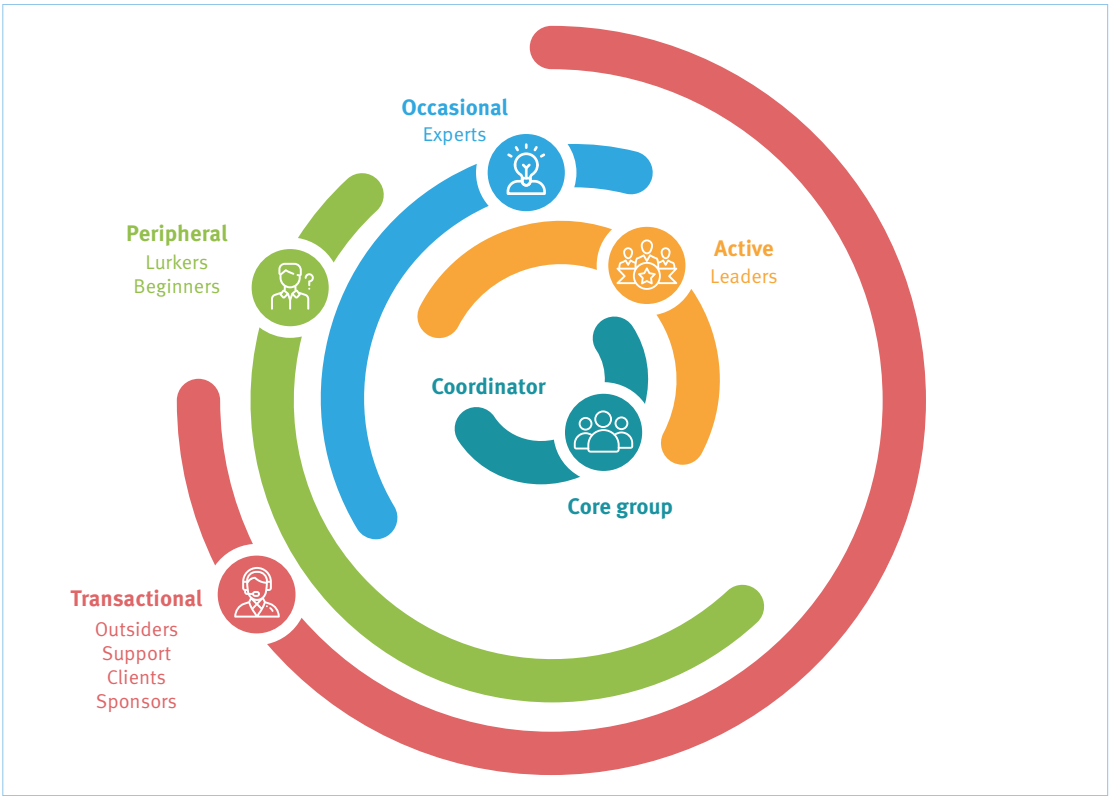
Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are a group of people who share a concern or passion for something that they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2006). CoPs define themselves through three core dimensions (Wenger, 1998, p. 2):

- **What it is about:** its joint enterprise, as understood and continually renegotiated by its members
- **How it functions:** the relationships of mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity
- **What capability it has produced:** the shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time.

CoPs are often composed of people who share knowledge and expertise and support each other in the learning process, as these communities naturally provide a shared context for people to communicate and share information and personal experiences. CoP members may have very different levels of interest and involvement. This can be schematised as a bulb layered according to the level of investment and participation of the members (Fig. 25).

Figure 25. Levels of participation in communities of practice. Source: Akkoc (2019).



If you are starting your MSP and choose a CoP as the organisational format, please take great care to choose the right tools and platforms for the group to interact; this is a strategic choice that should reflect the desired intensity and nature of the relationships between the actors (**Chapter 5**). For example, is a formal email newsletter most appropriate here, or perhaps a less formal social media group? Match the format of your CoP to the needs of its members. Many knowledge-centred MSPs and CoPs have gone virtual, or at least partly so (Box 8). Online platforms offer many advantages in terms of capacity-building, and more real-time sharing of data and solutions. They also allow for a greater diversity of participants than physical meetings, which are not always easily accessible.

See Chapter 5

Box 8. Examples of online collaboration platforms and CoPs

- **GWP Toolbox IWRM Action Hub**: offers a wide range of tools, resources, and case studies as well as CoPs on a variety of topics related to IWRM
- **The Water Network Communities**: offer professionals a way to learn, exchange, and build skills, and are vital for turning knowledge into action by building on members' collective expertise and maintaining a constant flow of learning
- **Water Youth Network**: for youth organisations and organisations working with youth to collaborate, coordinate, and act on water issues facing this and future generations
- **WASH in Health Care Facilities CoP**: an action-oriented learning platform coordinated by Emory University which seeks to connect WASH practitioners operating in health care contexts around the world

Takeaways

Here are some key takeaways on developing and implementing a multi-stakeholder knowledge management strategy:

- Knowledge generation is often a co-creation process. Knowledge transfer however should always be a two-way process. It requires interactive tools to elicit and circulate latent/experiential knowledge.
- Information becomes knowledge through action.
- Fostering a learning culture requires trust and accountability.
- A learning culture can only be attained when individuals are enabled to change their behaviour and assumptions. Gaining knowledge about water and its issues can be considered complete only after implementing learning on the ground.
- Different types of knowledge platforms within or outside your MSP create a solid base for knowledge sharing, e.g. learning alliances and CoPs.

Ingredient 4

Resource mobilisation

Solving water problems requires financial resources. MSPs can help leverage new funding, including from the private sector, yet they also require resources to function. Whether your MSP facilitates small-scale knowledge sharing or runs major projects, it is crucial that your platform secures the resources to sustain itself. A thorough business plan is therefore needed.

This chapter introduces core theoretical concepts of water finance, suggests practical solutions for designing MSPs for financing water and leveraging additional funding, and shows how to develop a business model for financial sustainability of your MSP. It also covers how to adopt a gender lens in budgeting and resource allocation.

Key questions

- What are the key elements related to water finance?
- What role do MSPs play in financing water?
- How can you create finance partnerships with the private sector?
- How should you a design a multi-stakeholder business plan?
- How can MSPs advance safeguards in water finance?

Tools and concepts

- Full-cost recovery
- 3T Model
- Repayable financing
- MSPs as financial intermediaries
- Public–private partnership (PPP)
- Water funds
- Blended finance
- Business model canvas
- Business plan for water
- Gender-responsive budgeting

What are the key elements related to water finance?

Valuing Water

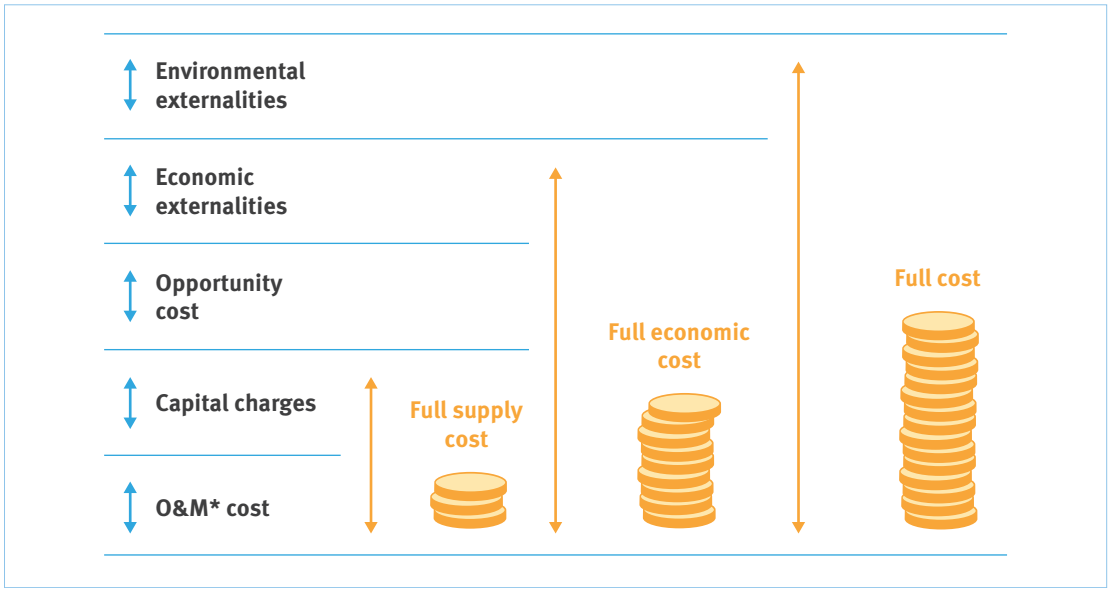
Water can be valued in numerous ways given its diverse nature as a tradable good, a public and a common-pool resource, a human right, and a pillar of life. Water provides both economic and non-economic benefits, and it is crucial to recognise the many **different types of value** that it provides to the economy, society, and the environment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018).

Water is an under-valued resource that is often taken for granted or perceived as 'free'. In monetary terms, water services are often under-priced, which can drive suboptimal water decisions and hinder full-cost recovery. Many of the public and private benefits generated by water management cannot be easily monetised, which also undermines revenue flows. Before we get into how your MSP can tap into new financing mechanisms and stimulate successful resource mobilisation, you will need to understand some of the basic concepts around costs, funding, and financing in the water sector.

Unpacking full-cost recovery

Water resources management involves several types of costs (Fig. 26). These include supply, economic, and environmental costs. Estimating full cost is a complex process. Water supply costs may include source works, treatment, and conveyance to the users, such as polishing treated water for recycling and machineries for ancillary business on the by-products of water processes. These make up 'capital charges', which go hand-in-hand with 'operation and maintenance costs'. 'Economic costs' entail the opportunity costs of not engaging in other economic alternatives plus the economic externalities linked to the investment. 'Environmental costs' consider the sums required to manage externalities, e.g. to protect or clean up the water source from pollution.

Figure 26. General principles for costing water. Source: Global Water Partnership (2000).



A common mistake in assessing resourcing for water is failing to consider full costs. In order to properly price and finance water management solutions, the concept of full-cost recovery should be integrated into decision-making. MSPs can help do this by compiling different types of data on costs and value, facilitating conversations between actors with different types of information, or conducting new analysis.

Funding and financing mechanisms

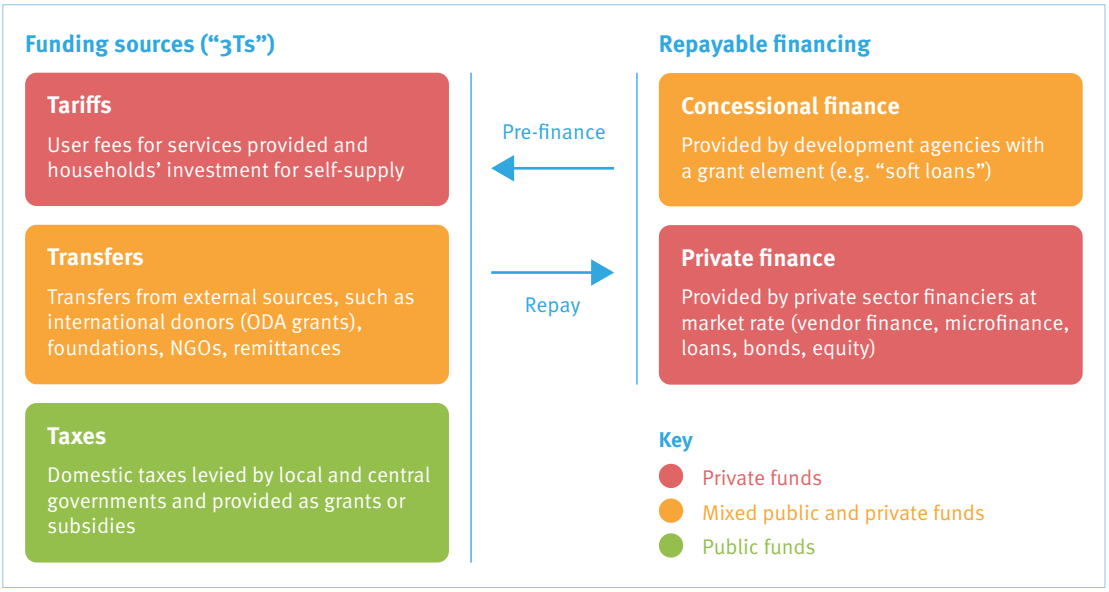
Not all water MSPs deal directly with financing water. However, it is helpful to understand the basic concepts around the traditional revenue sources for the water sector (Goksu et al., 2017). First of all, let's consider the difference between **funding and financing**:

Strategic Financial Planning

- **Funding:** Corresponds to income or cashflow that water projects generate, which mainly comes from the "3Ts": tariffs, taxes, and transfers.
- **Financing:** Refers to the resources for capital investments and covering operational and maintenance costs which are paid back with funding sources. The choice of funding and the flows of financing depend on the political environment, regulation framework, institutional arrangements, as well as conditions of capital markets. These factors and others make up the 'ecosystem' in which an MSP exists (**Chapter 2**).

See Chapter 2

Figure 27. Traditional revenue sources for the water sector. Source: Goksu et al. (2017).



Generating basic revenues: 3Ts

Revenue is crucial to support both operation and maintenance (O&M) expenses as well as capital costs. Here is a description of the **major sources of income** which can be used to cover these costs (Goksu et al., 2017):

Generating Basic Revenues for Water

- **Tariffs:** All payments or direct investments made by water users for service provision. Water service providers are usually in charge of collecting tariffs. As opposed to sizeable urban areas, in rural settings tariff systems face more challenges, particularly where there are long traditions of charging little to nothing for water. Tariffs are not to be confused with charges, which are aimed to cover the negative externalities associated with exploiting water resources (e.g. groundwater abstraction charges or pollution charges).
- **Taxes:** Funding from the general public budget of governments at different levels to cover water sector costs through reallocations and subsidies. For example, extending piped water to slums where households would pay a subsidised tariff that only covers operating costs. Subsidies may be wrapped into 'soft' loans from the government to the service provider.

- **Transfers:** Include funding provided by development agencies, NGOs, and philanthropists. These are mostly grants used to cover capital costs, as opposed to O&M costs.

Repayable financing

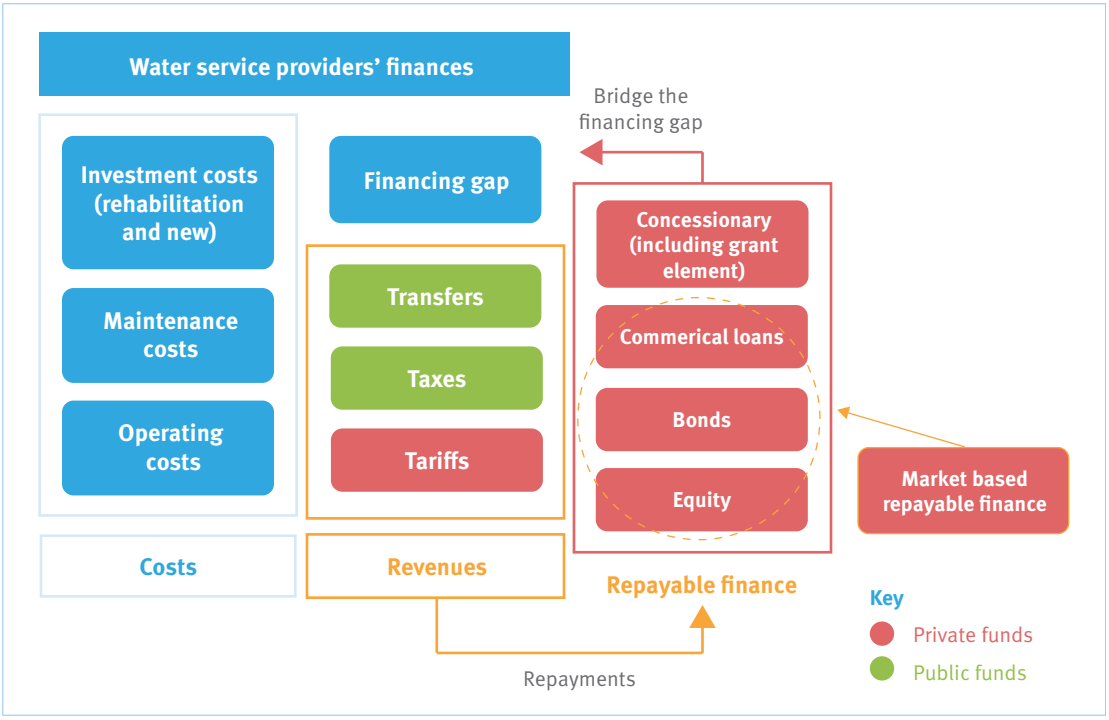
Repayable Sources of Finance for Water

Investments in water supply and sanitation tend to be front-loaded, which makes it necessary to mobilise repayable financing upfront which will then need to be repaid through tariffs, taxes, or transfers (Fig. 28). There are two types of **repayable financing**:

- **Concessional finance:** Offered by development banks (multilateral, regional and domestic), at lower interest rates owing to them containing a grant element. For instance, non-OECD countries such as China, India, and Brazil offer loans on concessional terms under the New Development Bank. This type of finance typically flows to national governments, which perform the role of a sovereign guarantee.

- **Commercial finance:** Providers of commercial finance range from commercial banks and microfinance institutions to private investors and investment funds. This is primarily market-based finance, which includes loans, bonds, and equity, as well as microfinance, usually provided at higher interest rates. Utilities may raise capital through public equity markets by selling shares to investors through organised stock exchanges. Shares confer ownership rights to shareholders (prospective capital gains and dividends) and can be a form of long-term investment finance for water infrastructure (Croce et al., 2015).

Figure 28. How repayable finance works. Source: Trémolet (2011).



What role do MSPs play in financing water?

MSPs as financial intermediaries

As we have seen, the many values of water and many types of water financing can make it hard to mobilise resources for water. In the right context, MSPs can play an important role as financial intermediaries and overcome this challenge. In fact, many would argue that today's water sector financing gap cannot be adequately financed without MSPs (De Pazzis and Muret, 2021). MSPs can contribute to financing water in the following ways:

- **'Crowding in' funding for water:** Direct financing is increasingly being replaced by more complex or 'hybrid' financial products. Various types of actors create different financing opportunities (e.g. see the next section on PPPs). If these actors are part of an MSP or affiliated with it, the MSP can be used as a platform to bring actors together and align their interests to mobilise resources in a collective way. MSPs can also bring in new actors that can provide new data and new perspectives on financing.

- **Brokering partnerships to mobilise resources:** Because today's financing schemes depend on more actors than ever before, MSPs can play a key role in facilitating the design and implementation of finance for water. At times, potential funding partnerships experience inertia or tension (**Chapter 6**). MSPs can act as a broker between actors to help them see the mutual benefits of investing in water, thereby helping them build a shared investment rationale.

See Chapter 6

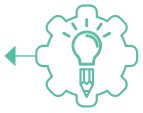
- **Sharing knowledge and articulating value:** Good data are at the heart of water financing: we know that we can't cost water financing properly without articulating the **'true' values** of water and water infrastructure. This can require collecting new data, repackaging existing data, or communicating these data in new ways to new audiences. MSPs with knowledge sharing functionalities built into their ToCs can be very helpful here. Such knowledge sharing can then lead to shifting value analysis, different perspectives on costs and benefits, and ultimately a stronger financial rationale for funding water governance (Valuing Water Initiative, 2020).

Economic value of water

How can you create finance partnerships with the private sector?

- The public sector has traditionally played the leading role in water finance, while the **private sector** has been generally under-represented. Financing a water-secure future will however require engaging more with private sources of finance (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). Here are several types of partnership models that can be used to mobilise private actors towards water sector finance.

Private sector water service providers



Public–private partnership

An increasing number of PPPs started emerging in the water sector from the early 1990s onwards as a result of increased demand and limited public finance. PPPs typically take the form of private capital financing government projects and services upfront, and then drawing profit from taxpayers and/or users over the course of the partnership contract. Especially in market-oriented water management approaches, PPPs are considered an attractive organisational set-up for large and expensive infrastructure-oriented programmes addressing public needs such as water supply, wastewater treatment, or irrigation schemes.

A typical PPP does more than just link public and private actors: it often requires establishing a whole new organisational structure (Canton, 2021) (Fig. 29). There are various models for structuring PPPs, including: Build, Operate, and Own (BOO), Build, Operate, and Transfer (BOT), Build, Operate, Own and Transfer (BOOT) or Build, Lease, and Transfer (BLT) (Table 2). Each has its own merits and demerits depending on the unique circumstances of a given implementation model. Who bears the risks, and the projected length of the contract, are two important factors that need to be considered when choosing between the different PPP arrangements. To ensure value for money, PPP contracts are awarded based on competition.

Figure 29. Visualisation of a typical PPP model. Source: Canton (2021).

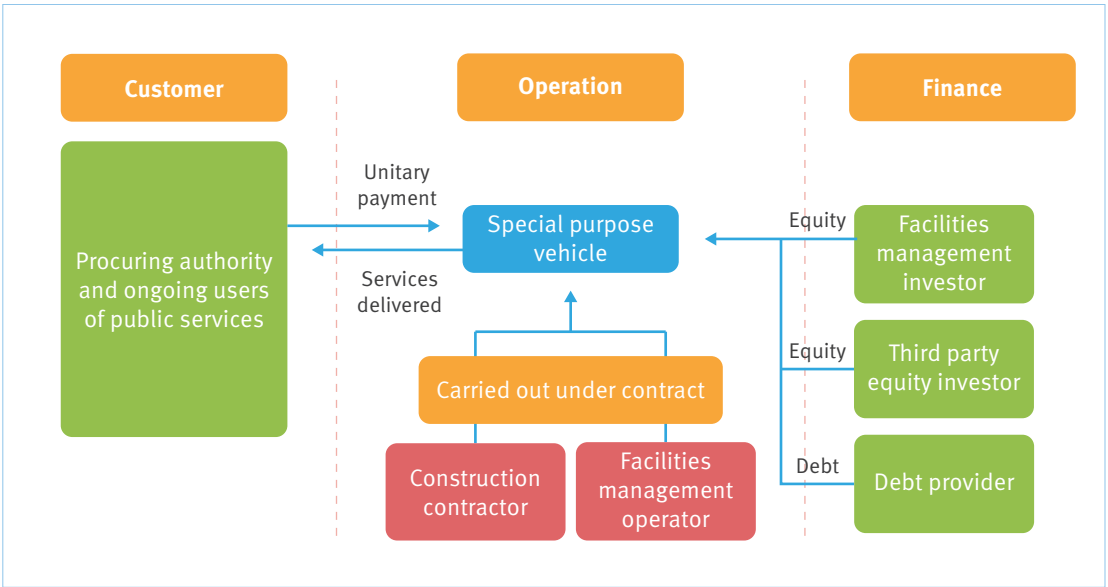


Table 2. Comparison of various PPP models[3]

Broad category	Main variants	Ownership of capital assets	Responsibility of investment	Assumption of risk	Duration of contract (years)
Supply and management contract	Outsourcing	Public	Public	Public	1–3
	Maintenance management	Public	Public/Private	Public/Private	3–5
	Operational management	Public	Public	Public	3–5
Turnkey		Public	Public	Public/Private	1-3
Affermage/ lease	Affermage	Public	Public	Public/Private	5–20
	BLT	Public	Public	Public/Private	5–20
Concessions	Franchise	Public/ Private	Public/Private	Public/Private	3–10
	BOT & BOOT	Public/ Private	Public/Private	Public/Private	15–30
Private ownership of assets and PFI* type	BOO	Private	Private	Private	Indefinite
	Private finance initiative	Private	Private	Public/Private	10–20
	Divesture	Private	Private	Private	Indefinite

*Private finance initiative

3 Source: Adapted from Karim (2011).

Water funds

'Water funds' is another partnership-based approach that can be used to leverage private investment in the water sector. While PPPs are traditionally used for financing water infrastructure and water services, water funds are mostly used as financial arrangements to manage water resources management initiatives at the watershed level, e.g. limiting water pollution and/or promoting water conservation (Box 9). Water funds are traditionally set up as MSPs that include a variety of actors such as governments, international agencies, local communities, water companies, hydropower producers, flood protection agencies, and private companies.

Box 9. The Nature Conservancy Water Fund – Bogotá, Colombia

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) created a water fund to address the issue of water pollution and increase access to drinking water in Bogotá. The fund was established in partnership with the Latin America Water Funds Partnership, Bogotá Water Utility Company, Bavaria SABMiller, the National Parks Unit, and Fondo de Patrimonio Natural.

Over a ten-year period, USD 39,485,264 million was raised from a variety of sources, including individual and corporate voluntary donations, multilateral donations, and government domestic cooperation funds. The TNC Water Fund compensated upstream communities for maintaining forests, paramos, and other lands that protect the city's water. This has protected water at its source and promoted water stewardship and agency coordination, which has led to greater water security, biodiversity protection, economic development, and climate change adaptation. Through this fund, water is cleaner and cheaper in Colombia.

Source: The Nature Conservancy (2022).

Like for PPPs, the performance and benefits of the water fund will depend on how well designed the governance and management structure is. Here are a few considerations and recommendations that can assist you in setting up a financially sustainable water fund model:

- **Financial analysis:** Scoping the size of the problems, assessing feasibility of planned interventions, and conducting cost-benefit analysis of each phase of the project cycle.
- **Financial planning:** Informed by the financial analysis, short and long-term planning can be developed, including full-cost assessment (operating the fund, implementing activities, building partnerships).
- **Fundraising:** Identifying different types of funding sources, connecting funding sources to funding needs.
- **Business case:** Assessment made for a specific investor in terms of benefits generated. Benefits to the private sector investors need to be clearly articulated.

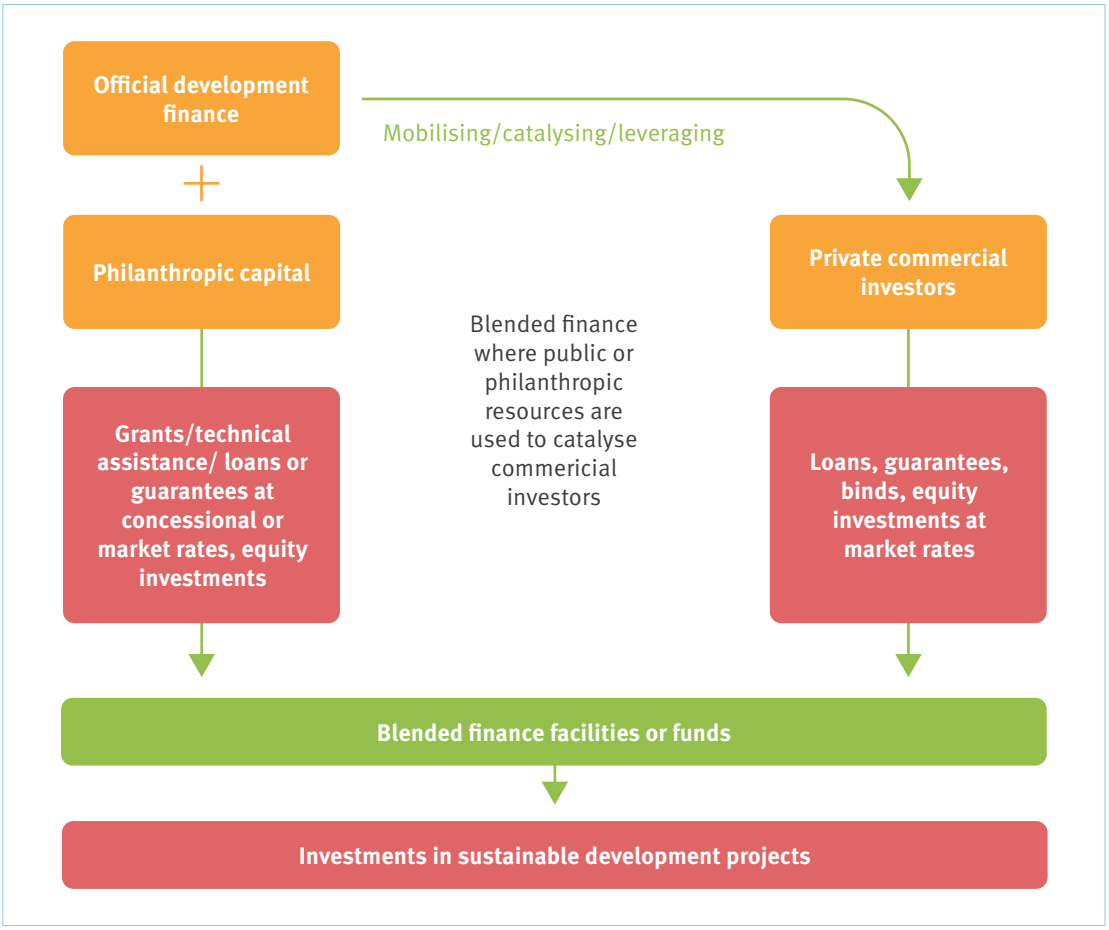
Evaluating Water Investments

Blended finance

'**Blended finance**' is receiving growing attention as a new model to attract or 'crowd-in' private investment towards implementing water-related projects. The basic idea with blended finance is to use concessional funds (often public or philanthropic money) to reduce the financial risk associated with a venture (Fig. 30). Thus, they are used or leveraged to drive down the cost of a project and make it more attractive to private investors. Concessional capital can come from governments, multilateral development banks, official development assistance, foundations, and so on. Combining these types of funds can help achieve the sustainable development goals of public partners while also generating returns for private investors, thus maximising the impact of a development scheme.

Blended Finance

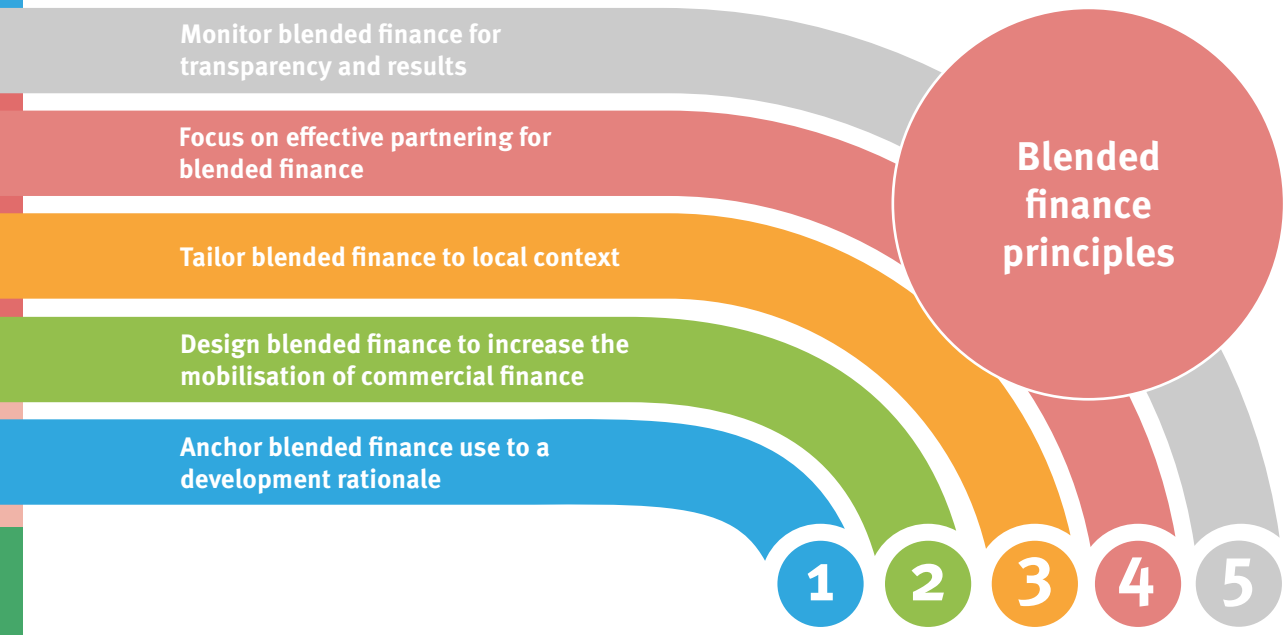
Figure 30. Blended finance mechanisms. Source: Tan (2019).



The four common blended finance mechanisms are: co-investment of concessional and private funds; guarantees and insurance by philanthropic investors; grants for technical assistance either at the start of the project or after completion to measure impact and; grants for design or preparation of the transaction structure. Regardless of the blended finance mechanism employed, the project should still demonstrate its overall bankability (or show its very high development impact if semi-bankable). Therefore, if your water project wants to attract blended finance, you must ensure it will be generating basic revenue through the 3Ts.

It may be that your MSP is well positioned to connect concessional and non-concessional funding and facilitate blended financing mechanisms. If so, you may use the OECD's five principles for blended finance as a benchmark for effectiveness and sustainability (Fig. 31). These principles can help you ensure that your blended finance mechanisms are well anchored within existing development priorities, manage discussions to balance risk allocation between financial partners, and/or help track the effectiveness of results achieved.

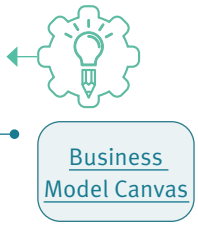
Figure 31. Blended finance principles. Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018).



How should you design a multi-stakeholder business plan?

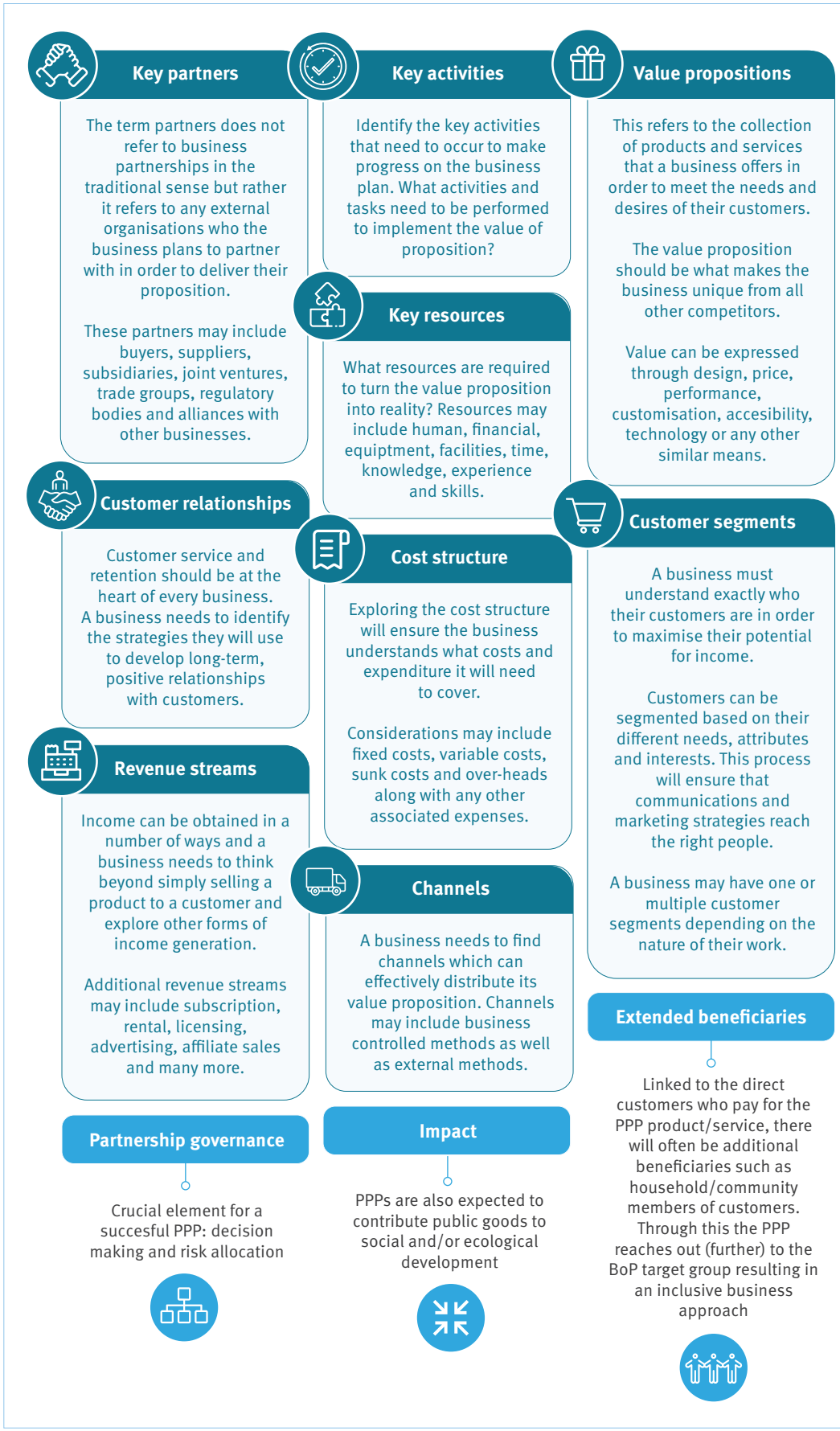
A good narrative is key to convincing investors. Beyond working on your elevator pitch, you will also need to develop a solid business plan for your MSP to become financially attractive and sustainable. A business model canvas and business plans are two practical tools that can help you make the case for your proposed project and help you ensure your financial sustainability.

Business model canvas



The '**business model canvas**' offers a tool to reflect and analyse the essentials for a venture to operate in a business environment in the long term (Fig. 32). The canvas model can help you map out your position in the business ecosystem, including how you relate to suppliers, distributors, customers, competitors, government agencies, and so on who are involved in delivering a specific product or service. The central starting point of the canvas is the value proposition where you will need to clearly articulate the value your proposed initiative adds in terms of goods, services, or other values.

Figure 32. Business model canvas. Source: Osterwalder and Pigneu (2009).



However, when considering a business model that adds value to a common-pool resource, some additional considerations are required. In working with MSPs and water, it can be helpful to use an extended business model canvas to address and assess the (expected or realised) social and environmental benefit of a project. This focus makes it a good fit for many water MSPs. This canvas elaborates Figure 32, adding elements of governance, business ecosystem, extended beneficiaries, and (social/public) impact.

Business plans for water

Your MSP may play a role in supporting the development of a business plan using some of the aforementioned concepts. As water MSPs bring unique challenges, here are some key considerations to bear in mind when developing a business plan with multi-stakeholder approaches to water problems:

- **Assessing complexity:** Building a business plan with a group of partners in an MSP is more complex than for a single business. Many perspectives and actors must be incorporated. Be sure to validate your business plan with all relevant actors, and ensure that it provides a realistic depiction of how the actors and parts work together.
- **Allocating proper time:** The value proposition of a multi-stakeholder approach may be richer and more complex than that of a single business. Assessing the different dimensions of value that your approach could bring by being associated with an MSP is likely to take considerable time.
- **Getting good data and information:** Good business plans are based on good information. In the water sector, good data can be difficult to find. It may be necessary to locate or collect new data to support your case. Invest time in building good data, or identifying areas where better data are needed.
- **Identify and test assumptions:** Your business plan may assume that particular governance or accountability mechanisms are already in place. Be sure to identify and test your assumptions (return to your ToC in **Chapter 2** if needed).

See Chapter 2

How can MSPs advance safeguards in water finance?

We should not overlook women's contributions to the economy (especially in the form of unpaid non-market care and domestic work, including child-rearing and fetching water and fuel for cooking) and their disproportionate vulnerability to economic and environmental challenges, which in turn can result in biased budgets and fiscal policy. As a consequence, such policies can perpetuate and transmit gender biases. These sorts of biases are often reflected in the conceptualisation, formulation, execution, and impacts of national budgets and policies (Cap-Net UNDP et al., 2021). MSPs need to make concerted efforts towards ensuring that water-related finance and budgets are inclusive and gender-sensitive.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is the integration of gender analysis into the formulation and implementation of public budgets or project budgets (Burnley et al., 2016). GRB can help us reveal that what looks like gender-neutral budget decisions may well have differential impact between men and women (Box 10). Many governments around the world have made an effort to ensure that their budgets are gender-responsive. Among these governments are Austria, Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, and Sweden (Trapp et al., 2017).

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Box 10. Gender-responsive budgeting in water and sanitation services in Delhi, India

A study in India that examined GRB in urban water and sanitation in two resettlement colonies (Jhuggi-Jhopri Clusters) in Delhi aimed to test the hypothesis that budgeting and planning affect women and girls more than men and boys. This study revealed that urban water and sanitation policies and programmes in India are 'gender-blind' because they ignore gender-based disadvantages in access to safe water, sanitation, wastewater, and drainage. Budgetary allocations for water and sanitation in resettlement colonies are extremely inadequate and do not match the needs and service delivery. This therefore meant that India's efforts at gender-responsive budgeting have been surface-level only.

Source: Panda and Agarwala (2012).

Here are three steps that you can follow to incorporate GRB into any project or programme related to your MSP (UN Women et al., 2015):

Gender Analysis

1. **Gender analysis:** This is the core element and starting point of GRB. It analyses how the budget has been spent in the past, and who benefited from it (e.g. did men benefit disproportionately?). This involves qualitative analysis such as gender-differentiated analysis regarding access to services provided, as well as gender-differentiated outcomes of service provision.

2. **Identify objectives towards gender equality:** Outline specific objectives for gender outcomes, and establish indicators associated with specific budgeted activities based on the gender analysis.

3. **Incorporate these objectives into budget planning:** Incorporating GRB increases transparency by providing a clear analysis of how the government funds are being spent. It can increase accountability by ensuring government budgets are fulfilling or addressing citizens' needs.

Takeaways

Here are some key takeaways on partnership-based approaches to financial resource mobilisation and ways of ensuring sustainable financing within and outside your water MSP:

- Articulating the multiple values, benefits, and costs of water, and doing so with a partnership-based approach, is a way to more effectively mobilise resources for water.
- There are various existing partnership models to mobilise private sector investments in the water sector (PPP, water funds, blended finance). Demonstrating bankability is key to attracting the private sector.
- Direct financing is increasingly being replaced by more complex or hybrid financial products: get to know these in your MSP's context.
- Because financing schemes nowadays depend more on actors than ever before, MSPs can play a key role in facilitating the design and implementation of finance for water.
- Use an extended business canvas to ensure social, environmental, and governance aspects are taken into account.
- Consider inclusion and sustainability not just in how you run your MSP, but in how financing for water is structured. GRB and other safeguards will not emerge organically: they often need to be institutionalised.

Ingredient 5

Effective communication

Underlying any effective MSP is the capacity and willingness to communicate in an open, respectful, honest, and empathetic way. This involves the ability to both listen to others and to clearly articulate your own perspectives and ideas.

This chapter focuses on effective communication, which is a key competence in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes. What are the key things to consider in terms of MSP communications? You will discover how to have multi-stakeholder conversations within your MSP, as well as beyond it. Think of the latter as an elevator pitch for your MSP.

Key questions

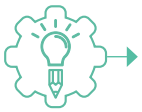
- How can you sustain effective dialogue within your MSP?
- How can you communicate effectively with external audiences?
- How can you choose between face-to-face and virtual communications?

Tools and concepts

- Non-violent communication
- Safe spaces
- Strategic Communications Framework
- Communication plans
- Communication campaigns
- Social media
- Storytelling
- Face-to-face vs virtual engagement
- Virtual event checklist
- Effective hybrid meetings

How can you sustain effective dialogue within your MSP?

As MSPs bring together a wide range of actors at different levels, you are bound to work with people with different views, and there may be some hidden or unresolved tensions. Especially in the water sector – where MSPs are likely to involve engineers and non-engineers, policy-makers, academics, consultants, and community representatives – there is plenty of room for misunderstandings, as everyone brings their own jargon, knowledge, values, priorities, agendas, and sometimes strong feelings towards water. We therefore need to make sure we create spaces in which everyone feels free to bring to the table what they want/need to and can expect to be heard.



Non-violent communication

Non-violent communication (NVC) is the basis for effective communication and is therefore a fundamental part of dialogue among MSP participants.

Steps for NVC are as follows (Rosenberg, 2015):

1

Step 1. Practising neutral observation without any value judgements: Neutral observations are facts (what we see, hear, or touch), not our interpretations. NVC avoids generalisations (such as saying, "You always..."). If we associate observation with evaluation, people may hear criticism and resist us. Instead, emphasise observations that are specific to time and context.

Step 2. Communicating feelings rather than policy positions or issues: Feelings are distinct from thoughts (e.g. "I feel that I have not been treated fairly"). Feelings reflect whether our needs are being met. Recognising feelings helps us connect with others, and expressing feelings can help overcome disagreements. They are often hard to express as they require us to be vulnerable.

2

3

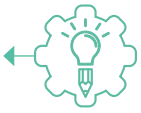
Step 3. Identifying needs that often further reflect your emotions and feelings: These are universal human needs which can be classified into nine types: food, safety, love, understanding/empathy, creativity, recreation, belonging, autonomy, and meaning.

Step 4. Making requests that meet the need: Requests should not be about asking someone to refrain from doing something. A request is something that is doable and that will help you meet your needs. When a request is denied, it is best to put yourself in the other person's shoes and understand why they didn't say 'yes', before deciding how to proceed. Requests should use positive, action-oriented language.

4

These methods can be implemented hand-in-hand with creating a safe space in order to effectively create transformational conversations.

Creating safe spaces



Safe spaces can promote a level of comfort that allows partners to freely share their views, perspectives, and interests with one other. This often results in conversations that can speed up the process and quality of partnership building. A safe space is the basis for establishing mutual respect among the different stakeholders and developing trust. Creating a safe space for conversations is not only the primary responsibility of a facilitator in an MSP, but should also be upheld by each stakeholder as they dialogue with one another. The key components of this foundation are as follows (adapted from Kline, 2005):

- **Engage as equals:** There are often different power dynamics between stakeholders, leading to divergent identities and thinking in terms of 'I and them', which is often counterproductive for partnerships. Engaging as equals allows an 'us' way of thinking. Furthermore, engaging as equals works towards addressing power imbalances based on gender, age, socio-economic status, and other dimensions of advantage and disadvantage.

- **Hold space for each other:** This means giving each other equal and appropriate amounts of space to speak. It also includes expressing appreciation and encouragement towards the different stakeholder perspectives and opinions, thereby creating a welcoming space for everyone to contribute to the ongoing conversation.

- **Active listening:** Beyond holding a space to speak, we should also try to be good listeners. Listening well without interrupting is a necessary part of good communication. Doing so enables us to receive better information and respond well and appropriately.

- **Listening with deep respect and without interruption:** This induces an environment where each stakeholder is valued. In particular, stakeholders can ask themselves, "Are you listening to understand or listening to respond?" This requires a conscious effort to reframe our way of thinking, including demonstrating compassion and understanding. Feelings and emotions often also influence dialogue (which is valid), but the expression of these feelings and emotions should be within boundaries that allow for starting a new conversation or restarting an existing conversation. Facts harvested from knowledge management processes (**Chapter 3**) can greatly help actors face a shared reality and move conversations forward in more constructive directions, rather than arguing about facts.

See Chapter 3

- **Stay curious:** To move towards **agreement on shared visions and goals**, it is important to understand stakeholder interests, opinions, and perspectives. Asking questions can clarify these aspects while creating spaces for each perspective to effectively contribute. Asking questions to put yourself in another person's shoes goes a long way. Staying curious and open-minded can also address other barriers highlighted in Figure 33.

See Chapter 6

- **Powerful questions:** As a step towards transformative conversations, powerful questions can be asked. Powerful questions are often exploratory and allow the entire group to gain better insight into the situation. They should focus on the range of perspectives of the different stakeholders, rather than solely on the issue itself.

Figure 33. Roadblocks to clarity. Source: Neuroleadership Group (2018)

How can you communicate effectively with external audiences?

Strategic communications

Communicating the work of a water MSP to external stakeholders should be strategic and serve the goals that were jointly agreed within the MSP. Strategic communication is a targeted way of communicating that is meant to advance a particular objective or message. This strategy is deliberate, with messages and tactics used to help engage specific audiences in the hope of sparking specific change. Therefore, the type of change your MSP aims for (personal, relational, structural, and cultural: refer back to **Chapter 2**) is an important aspect to consider when building the communications strategy.

See Chapter 2

Here are some elements that will guide you in formulating a communication strategy aligned with your values and principles:

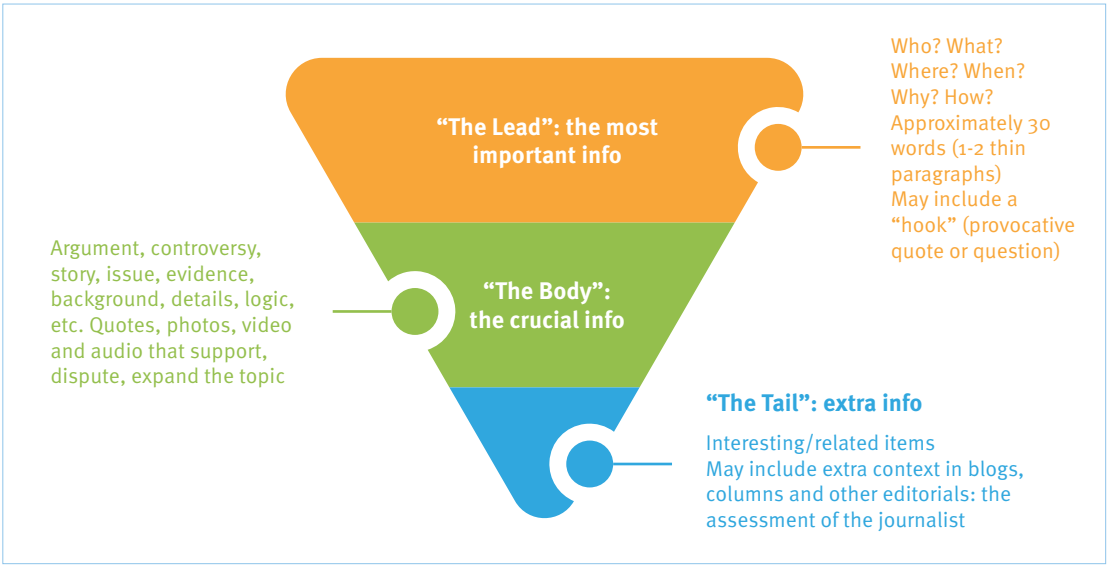
- **Asset inventory:** Scoping out the available resources, assets, and allies/partners: who is on your side, who you can rely on, the channels you have in use already (e.g. the main social media channels of a key partner).
- **Communications objectives:** Using the information from the asset inventory and context analysis, communication objectives can then be defined. Communication objectives in general focus on one or more of the following objectives, such as:
    - **Informing:** increasing awareness about the topic that will be delivered
    - **Information and knowledge sharing:** exchanging data and insights
    - **Consulting:** creating mutual understanding, exchanging meanings, learning, and reducing misinterpretation
    - **Collaborating:** aligning work towards shared goals
    - **Changing and altering attitudes:** shifting perception after the communication is delivered, persuading people to act differently, and heeding call to action.
- **Target audiences:** The first step is to define the target audiences you want to reach (primary, secondary, etc.). The more specific your audience definition, the more effective your plan will be. Once you have identified your

audience, you need to conduct further research to determine the proper channels and messages to reach them effectively. Areas of research would typically include: demographics, communications channels, behaviour, and pain points/challenges. Once you have defined and understood your target audiences, you can begin to create strategies, messages, and tactics that are tailored to your target audiences' needs, wants, and values.

- **Key messages:** Effective communication requires consistent, clear messages that are short, attractive, easy to remember, and in line with the values of the MSP. Key messages are the main points of information you want your audiences to hear, understand, remember, and (in many cases) act on. They are important because they serve as the foundation of the MSP's branding and should be crafted together with the internal stakeholders. The key messages can be used as a stepping stone for drafting lengthier and more detailed communications (e.g. news articles and press releases) that exploit the 'inverted pyramid' format (Fig. 34). These should be routinely revisited over time to ensure that they still meet your needs and those of the target audiences.

- **Communication channels:** In order to maximise the communication impact and to actively inform and engage the target audiences, your MSP should employ a blend of tools, channels, and activities. Those could range from documentation (visibility items, leaflets, posters, infographics), publications (scientific publications, articles, briefs, press releases), and events (workshops, consultations, conferences, info campaigns, seminars/webinars) to online presence (website, social media, blogs, communities of practice, newsletters, podcasts). A combination of different channels will increase the impact of the communication efforts.

Figure 34. Inverted pyramid (Ohio State). Source: Taken from Roberts (2016).



Communication plans

Once you have a better understanding of your target audiences, the key messages your MSP would like to communicate, and the channels of communication available, you can develop a simple communication plan to tailor the messages to your respective audiences and select the most efficient channels to deliver those messages (Table 3). It is always helpful to assign responsibilities within the team and to follow progress by adding a note on the current status, which will enhance the learning within the MSP.

Table 3. Communication planning table for stakeholder engagement[4]

Key message	Target audience/ stakeholder	Channel	Timeline	Responsibility	Status

Strategic communications channels

Communication campaigns

Behaviour Change Communication

Tackling water management problems often requires **behavioural change**, such as reducing pollution and water use, and increasing flood awareness and preparation. Communication or outreach campaigns on water can draw on the emotional bond that many people have with this resource (Box 11). For example, conveying a sense of shared responsibility to manage water well is often effective. Risk awareness can be coupled with a motivation to help protect water (Nelson et al., 2011).

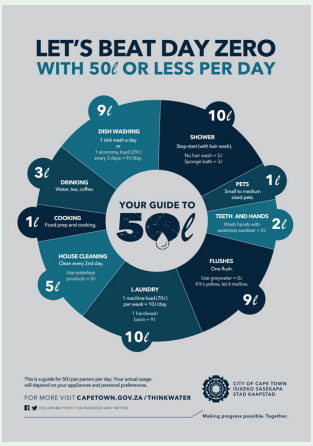
Box 11. "Let's Beat Day Zero" communication campaign in Cape Town, South Africa

South African cities experienced the worst climate-related drought on record in 2018 due to rainfall deficits. Cape Town was the most affected. Communication campaigns helped the people of Cape Town to avoid 'Day Zero' (when Cape Town's municipal water supply would be turned off) by raising awareness. The campaigns led to gradual restrictions on water use.

In May 2017, Level 4 water restrictions were introduced with the "When the Taps Run Dry" campaign, aimed at reducing water use to less than 100 litres per person per day. In February 2018, water restrictions were raised to Level 6B (50 litres per person per day), supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature's Wednesday Water File titled "It's Time to Prepare for Day Zero".

Through these campaigns, the dreaded Day Zero was averted and some valuable lessons were learned. This event raised awareness and awakened South Africa to the magnitude of water-related issues, leading to investment and the installation of desalination plants in preparation for future events.

Source: Muizenberg Improvement District (2018) and Shepherd (2019).



4 Source: Authors.

Social media

Social media can be used as a two-way communication channel: to share knowledge materials and insights with others; and to listen to what the audience has to say. MSPs can use social media to amplify behaviour communication campaigns and create momentum towards acting on water-related issues. You can also create groups that can be used to communicate with MSP partners. One thing to remember, however, is that the information you publish on social media will invariably compete with lots of other voices. Some of these voices may raise useful discussion points and help check your assumptions; others may (deliberately or unintentionally) spread disinformation. While developing your voice on social media, it is therefore helpful to team up with widely trusted sources – such as respected journalists, science communicators, and scientifically minded advocates – who can reinforce your messages and verify or debunk competing stories. Identifying knowledge and communications allies (and influencers!) can be done as part of the stakeholder analysis discussed in **Chapter 1**.

See Chapter 1

Storytelling

One pitfall in strategic communications is information overload. To capture key messages in a digestible way, it may be preferable to think of telling a story. Although the word 'story' may remind you of fairy tales, here it refers to a coherent narrative, which sends the listener on a journey, a quest, from a beginning (problem analysis) all the way through towards a more or less happy ending (the recommended approach). Stories not only help us consume information easily, but they allow us to experience information. Experiences are closely connected to emotion, and therefore stay with us for longer. A nice way of interrelating a complex story with an easy-to-use visual is through a story map (Box 12).

Box 12. Story maps for the Hindon River rejuvenation

In India, ArcGis story maps were used to communicate about the highly polluted Hindon River, a tributary of the Yamuna. Users could navigate through the basin to see different challenges affecting certain segments of the tributary. Championed by the Tree Craze Foundation and the Indian Water Partnership, these maps have shown to be an effective tool to communicate basin information and characteristics with government officials and other external stakeholders. They also chart the development of the Hindon MSP, a dialogue between some 70 organisations for rejuvenating the river, which led to a partnership between GWP-India, GIZ, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the World Bank.

Source: Geospatial World (2020); Global Water Partnership (2022b).

How can you choose between face-to-face and virtual communications?

Changing times: face-to-face vs virtual engagement

The scope of virtual communication is now almost the same as non-virtual communication following the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw rapid changes and shifts in how we communicate owing to the need for people to communicate and work together virtually during COVID-19 lockdowns. This form of communication has savings in terms of both time and travel costs for meeting participants.

In the context of communication for MSPs, there are many options, including through social media, digital messages, and video conferencing, which is often more efficient and effective than in-person meetings. However, not all information and communication can be conveyed effectively in a virtual manner. For that reason, face-to-face

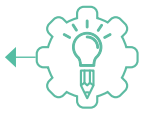
communication is still necessary. A comparison between the strengths and weaknesses of face-to-face and online modes of communications is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparing modes of communication for multi-stakeholder engagement[5]

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Face-to-face	**Trust:** Face-to-face events appear to be more conducive to developing in-depth discussions and building trust among participants. **Relationship building:** Face-to-face events provide a better opportunity for participants to build a solid working relationship, as there is almost always a space for networking and/or socialising. Provides a more streamlined and memorable experience than a virtual event. **Personalised feedback:** Organisers have the chance to collect on-the-ground feedback, observe the ambience in the venue, and make the adjustments needed to improve the experience straightaway.	**Inclusivity linked to resources:** Face-to-face events involve travel, which is linked to available resources, so participation risks being limited or geographically remote stakeholders could be excluded. **Limited audience size:** Linked again with resources but also with venue capacity, physical events can be limited in terms of audience size.
Online	**Inclusivity:** Can bring together a more varied set of participants who are not necessarily based in the same geographic location, especially those not based in capital cities. **Transparency:** Technological functions such as saving chats and poll results and recording sessions can be done easily at no additional cost and can greatly enhance transparency. **Fewer resources needed:** Participants do not need room rental, travel expenses, accommodation, and catering services, and can benefit from the event in the comfort and safety of their own homes. **Outreach:** Virtual events can register high no-show rates, sometimes close to 50 percent. However, many people register for events knowing in advance that they will not attend on the scheduled date and time, but that they still want to have access to the content at a later date.	**Limited interaction:** Time constraints and a lack of space for interaction reduce the possibility for attendees to interact with others with similar interests, who may view the event as less valuable and choose not to attend (self-exclusion). **Limited in time:** Keeping people's attention for long periods of time online can be challenging.

5 Source: Sauvage et al. (2021).

Effective virtual meetings checklist



Multi-stakeholder events in virtual settings can be challenging to organise. Table 5 includes things to keep in mind when planning for a meeting in a virtual setting.

Table 5. Checklist for planning effective virtual meetings

Before the event
• **Thorough preparation:** Understand your context and what's needed for this particular group, know your material well, and have a good, well-thought-out design. • **Tech set-up:** Consider the reliability of the internet connection, the technological set-up needed, the lighting, and the screen background. • **Tech hosting:** In larger meetings, a tech host may be appointed to collect all presentations, facilitate any technical difficulties, and so on. • **Script:** Preparing a detailed script that includes technical cues, e.g. for screen sharing, makes the online event and communications smoother. • **Design for a harvest:** Your process design needs to be oriented towards achieving the tangible and intangible outcomes sought by your work.
During the event
• **Communication:** Communicate openly and honestly: face-to-face expressions and gestures are often more difficult to observe in a virtual environment. Convey topics, opinions, and input so that they are clearly and easily understood. • **Time online:** Time can be very different when you are hosting online. In general, it takes more time to do anything online, so leave enough time for transitions, slow down the pace a bit, and be prepared to adjust the schedule, if needed. • **Conclusions:** Always leave enough time for drawing conclusions and summing up the actions, as well as for a harvest of the key takeaways.
After the event
• **Share documents carefully:** Be sure to share the correct document versions and consider online versions in which any changes can be reflected in real-time. Make sure technical information is understandable and figures are legible. • **Follow-up:** Allow your audience to stay engaged with your MSP after the event.

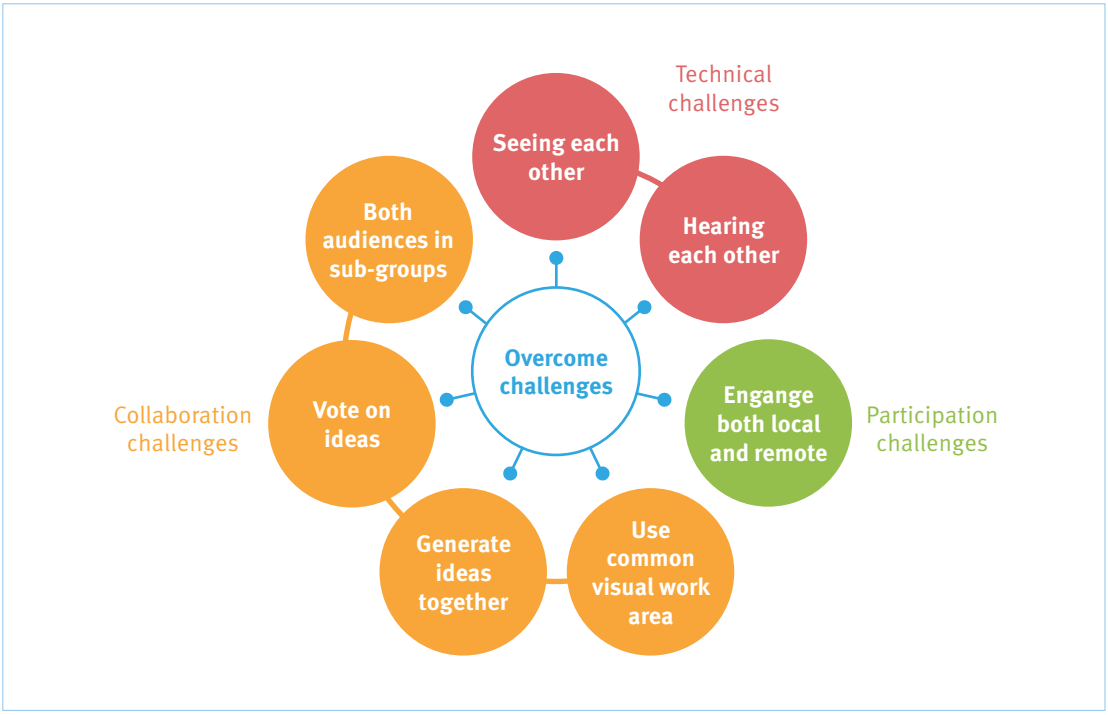
The new normal: hybrid communications

Hybrid events are a type of organised event that combines both physical and digital participation experiences and is usually delivered with a number of attendees physically present and the others participating remotely. The underlying principle of a hybrid event is for both online and physical participants to have identical experiences in terms of quality, interaction, viewing, and access. Building on the strengths of face-to-face and online events, the hybrid modality of engagement can have the following benefits:

- **Increased attendance:** Making your event accessible online will enable people to 'attend' who might otherwise be unable to do so because of travel, cost, time, and venue size constraints.
- **Higher audience engagement:** Adding a virtual element to your live event is the key, as it opens up a wider variety of engagement opportunities compared with a completely live event.
- **Valuable data:** In the case of hybrid events, you know the exact participation numbers, how participants engaged, and when they dropped out of your session. You can also gain information about your attendees' interests with the help of matchmaking data and polls, which will help you improve your future content.

Ensuring that online participants have an identical experience is easier said than done. To ensure a successful hybrid event, you will however need to address technical, participation, and collaboration challenges (Fig. 35). In addressing the technical challenges, focus first on hearing each other – even if you don't use video, it is still possible to collaborate in an event if participants can all hear each other clearly. Think about designing and testing your technical solutions a few days before the meeting. This can include walking through all tools/methods you hope to use during your meeting – voting, breakouts, etc. – and designing ready-to-use fallback solutions if the preferred options do not work.

Figure 35. Seven challenges of organising a hybrid event. Source: Lutz and Quinn (2022).



Engagement and participation challenges can be resolved by developing a detailed script that provides clarity on how the meeting will work technically for both in-room and remote participants, including the role and duties of on-site and hybrid facilitator(s). Another tool that can be used is a participation map to ensure that on-site and remote participants have equal chances to talk. You can also assign an on-site participant the role of 'remote advocate' or, if there are just a few on-site participants and many remote participants, consider an 'on-site advocate'.

Collaboration challenges may be the most challenging part, as typically the tools used in online events would differ from those in on-site events. In order to create a shared visual workspace, facilitators should make sure all presentations shared on-site can also be seen by remote participants. To make sure both groups see in real-time all notes, diagrams, and questions being posed, facilitators can do two things: i) have a colleague log into the virtual meeting platform to monitor all input and communicate it to the on-site group and ii) position a webcam or laptop camera so the flip chart or whiteboard can be seen by the remote participants. This is key to ensuring an inclusive process for generating ideas.

In terms of voting and polls, phone-based apps such as Slido, Mentimeter, and PollEv are quick and easy for both groups to use. Lastly, when it comes to breakouts or discussions in groups, facilitators need a functional equivalent to the virtual breakout rooms and the small meeting rooms. One way could be to segregate the on-site participants into their own small groups, while having the remote participants use breakouts within their virtual space.

Takeaways

When planning your strategic communication for your MSP, consider the following takeaways and best practices:

- **Practise listening when the other person is communicating.**
- **Set your communication objectives and have a clear idea of why you want to communicate and what the communication should lead to.**
- **Identify who you are communicating with. This includes defining your target audiences, as well-defined target audiences will form the basis of your communication strategy and inform the messages and channels you will use.**
- **Prepare key messages about what you want to communicate. These are the main points of information your audiences will hear, understand, and act on. They need to be short, attractive, and easy to remember.**
- **Carefully select the communication channels you will use. Use a combination of different channels to increase the impact of your communication efforts and, very importantly, carefully select channels that your target audiences use.**
- **Stay agile, don't simply repeat the same messages and select the same channels or tools every time, but take time to reflect and learn from previous communication and adjust future communication.**

Ingredient 6

Conflict management

Given water's multifaceted nature as a human right, a public good, and a finite commodity, and because of the multiplicity of different types of users, managing water can be a source of disagreement or even conflict. This highlights a key function of many water MSPs: to help manage conflict and broker agreements between multiple users and interests.

This chapter outlines the ways in which water and conflict are related in the context of MSPs, and the ways in which MSPs can be leveraged for different types of conflict management. It shows how we can understand and classify different types of conflict and introduces principles of negotiation. Finally, it shows how recognising our own conflict attitudes and behaviours can help us better address conflict.

Key questions

- What is the role of MSPs in (water) conflicts?
- How can you assess and approach water-related conflicts?
- How can you use negotiation to manage conflicts?
- How can you promote joint visioning?

Tools and concepts

- Types of water-related conflicts
- Steps for conflict assessment
- Conflict management approaches
- Conflict management continuum
- Negotiation styles and techniques
- Interest based negotiation
- Triangle of truths: three sides of a story
- Scenario building
- Serious games

What is the role of MSPs in (water) conflicts?

What is conflict management?

Conflict management is the process of finding and designing interventions to reach agreement between two or more stakeholders. This may include establishing institutions or mechanisms for future peace. Importantly, conflict management is not about avoiding, ignoring, suppressing, controlling, or eliminating the adversary. Rather, it starts with accepting a certain incompatibility of interests, views, and standpoints, trying to understand key issues, then taking steps to reach an agreement. MSPs are often well placed to accommodate these dynamics.

Water and conflict

The potential for conflict around water has long been a topic of inquiry. With growing concerns over climate change, warnings of water wars are a hot topic once again. However, as Aaron Wolf (1999) has noted, countries don't go to war over water alone. In fact, local conflicts around water also tend not to be violent due to the crucial nature of the resource for all parties. While violent conflict is relatively rare, conflicting interests are not. Competition over water reflects the multiple uses, users, and uncertainties of water supply.

Water Diplomacy

For instance, a key issue in **transboundary river basins is the upstream–downstream conflict**. There can be asymmetries in water security for upstream and downstream actors through, for instance, inequalities in water availability, physical damage from inadequate irrigation flows, or different responses to flood management. Beyond geography, power distribution also plays a role in the relations between riparian neighbours: powerful up-streamers may even deny that there is a conflict at all (Zeitoun and Warner, 2006). In such cases, a sense of systemic marginalisation and increasing vulnerability can bring about 'structural violence', which can result in frustrations and disenchantment that can compromise any negotiation. Seeing such asymmetries is a key step in conflict management and assessment.

Water conflicts are rarely short-term: complex conflicts are likely to involve a long series of overlapping dispute episodes. In fact, most apparent water conflicts are not (or not only) really about water. There may be a backlog of animosities, historical grievances, mistrust, alliances, and structural power imbalances between actors. Several related disputes may be going on at once with overlapping parties or issues, or broader political, economic, or social trends impacting on a smaller-scale dispute. Often deep-rooted and long-term, water conflicts are likely to reach critical points when institutions are not equipped to deal with sudden shocks, and where change is needed. MSPs can be called upon to play a role in problem-solving during critical points (Box 13).

Box 13. The South Asia Water Initiative

The South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI) was an MSP that sought to strengthen regional cooperation in the management of South Asia's major river systems in the Himalayas to promote sustainable, equitable, inclusive development, and resilience to climate change. These conflicts have existed for decades, but this MSP has developed four interlinked pathways to support outcomes: (i) building trust among countries, primarily by convening regional technical dialogues; (ii) generating new technical knowledge, including collaboration, for national programmes; (iii) building capacity among key institutions and stakeholders by familiarising them with regional collaboration efforts in other regions; and (iv) selecting and leveraging investments.

SAWI created an enabling environment, advanced critical practices, and promoted transboundary river cooperation. The long-term outlook for cooperation remains positive, with governments making tacit progress on various programmes and bilateral basin-specific agreements.

Source: World Bank (2022).

Conflict and MSPs

Since water is so vital to health and life, there are extra incentives to make water cooperation work despite disputes. Because MSPs work with a diversity of actors, they can be helpful in moving beyond traditional adversarial conflict resolution to modes of **alternative dispute resolution**, which in turn can help avoid expensive and lengthy conflictual proceedings. Going beyond traditional conflict resolution has opened up more space – and, in some cases, created an additional need – for MSPs.

Facilitation and Mediation

MSPs may be formed expressly to tackle a conflictive multi-stakeholder issue. Temporary MSPs have facilitated processes, including in the River Scheldt transboundary estuary and the trilateral World Commission on Dams (2000), as charted in Conca (2006) and Warner (2006). However, long-standing MSPs have the advantage that their members already know each other and may likely have found out in practice what the other's strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and sensitivities are. The role of MSPs or their members as 'boundary spanners', which function as 'antennae' or sensors within a political ecosystem, is important in this context (**Chapter 1**).

See Chapter 1

How can you assess and approach water-related conflicts?

Types of water-related conflicts

Conflict about water may be about the water use and distribution itself, but just as often conflict expresses tensions between the actors involved. As such, an entry point to start managing a water-related conflict is to identify whether the conflict stems from:

- **Competing resource claims:** This may have been the reason for establishing your MSP in the first place. For example, direct competition over limited water resources, or one sector's water use negatively impacting another, could be the motivation behind forming an MSP. In these cases, resource governance – not necessarily scarcity – is the cause of conflict. MSPs may be used to convene relevant actors to discuss and resolve such conflicts.

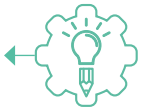
- **Tensions (disagreements and incompatibilities) between actors:** Because MSPs bring together very different entities, this can be a source of contention. It may be that the conflict is related to relations between the actors working together within the MSP, or with those associated with the MSP. In fact, many conflicts – including transboundary ones – are not really about the water itself, but about unresolved issues and grievances between the actors involved, ranging from historic land claims to personality clashes.

Perhaps your MSP is not facing a major conflict right now. However, suppressing or avoiding smaller conflicts in organisations like MSPs leaves tensions unaddressed, which can lead to much bigger and more disruptive ones. We know from disaster systems that catastrophes build to a critical point at which they erupt. Crises are necessary moments in complex systems we have to live with. Social systems, like natural ones, can be said to have 'organised criticality': once built up, the system's pent-up tension has to come out somehow (Bak, 1996). Rather than trying to suppress the eruption, we can mitigate smaller outbursts before a situation becomes unmanageable.

Stakeholders within MSPs should make sufficient time to get to know each other and to develop empathy (Poncelet 2001); over time, friendships tend to develop even across interest and identity lines. This may take the 'sting' out of knotty conflicts. However, this valuable quality of MSPs can turn into a weakness if we take it too far.

If we try too hard to keep a nice productive atmosphere, there is a risk that the real issues will never make it to the negotiation table. In such cases, the value added of MSPs as spaces for alternative dispute resolution disappears and it becomes attractive for participants to opt out and pursue alternative routes to address conflict (Roth et al., 2017). It is moreover important that an MSP has adequate resources, decision-making power, and positioning to be able to play a role in addressing conflict.

Steps for conflict assessment



Having scoped out some of the basics around why the conflict is happening, you can then engage in a more structured conflict assessment process. The convenor of this process not only leads fact-finding but also facilitates

a process of self-discovery of the disputants. Below are some specific steps to engage in formal conflict assessment (Shmueli, 2003):

1. **Introduction:** With a clear mandate, prepare interview protocols that encompass a set of open-ended questions, designed to obtain information organised around specific aspects of the conflict.

2. **Interactive information:** Gather data as stakeholders clarify their interests and positions. This can offer insight into the type of intervention most likely to succeed, and provides input into designing a work plan.

3. **Analysis:** Summarise findings, map areas of agreement and disagreement, and derive framing information.

4. **Process design:** Set goals, the agenda, the selection of stakeholder representatives who will participate directly in the process, and the time frame for suggested stages.

5. **Feedback:** Report writing, distribution, commenting.

Approaches to deal with conflicts

Conflict Management

Once you have a clear and nuanced understanding of the conflict, there are different **ways to address conflict** depending on what the conflict entails and on your level of ambition. Here are three overarching approaches to dealing with conflicts:

- **Conflict resolution:** Many conflicts can be resolved if we give them proper, careful attention. Conflict resolution can be achieved if parties are helped to explore, question, and reframe their positions and interests. Intervention by skilled third parties can help foster new thinking and new relationships. Exploring the roots of the conflict and identifying creative positive-sum solutions that the parties may have missed is a way to loosen commitment to entrenched positions and achieve resolution.

- **Conflict management:** Not all conflicts can be resolved. In some cases, conflict is an ineradicable consequence of deep differences of values and interests. In this case, resolving such conflicts can be unrealistic; instead, the best that can be done is to manage and contain them (and occasionally reach a historic compromise). Conflict management is the art of appropriate intervention to achieve political settlements, often led by actors with enough power and resources to pressure conflicting parties to settle. It is also the art of designing appropriate institutions to guide the inevitable conflict into appropriate channels.

- **Conflict transformation:** All conflicts can change. Conflict transformation entails putting an entirely new lens on the conflict. In some situations, it may be that the very structure of parties and relationships has conflictual relationships embedded within it. Conflict transformation is therefore a process of engaging with and transforming relationships, interests, and discourses in a way that supports change. This requires a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach that not all MSPs may be equipped to provide. Conflict transformation approaches prioritise building support for the people and resources within the conflict setting, as opposed to depending on outside mediation (Lederach, 1995; Zeitoun, Mirumachi, and Warner 2020).

Not all MSPs have the scope or resources to engage in all three of the above. Take an honest look at your partnership to assess what role a given MSP would best play vis-à-vis a given conflict. While specific disputes can be resolved, many natural resource management situations are characterised by complex interactions among personal, social, political, cultural, economic, and scientific factors that defy a quick or enduring resolution. The conflict may never really be resolved; making progress may be the best we can do (Daniels and Walker, 1997).

Conflict management options and continuum

The conflict management continuum can further help you define the options that you may want to select as part of your conflict management approach. The options and tools employed for managing conflicts should be proportional to the nature and severity of the problem(s). According to Moore (2014), the available conflict management options differ in various aspects, including: legal recognition of the process and outcome; confidentiality of the approach;

required specialisation of the third party assisting in conflict management; role and authority of the third party involved; nature of the resulting decision; and the degree of coercion exerted by or on the parties to the dispute. The continuum illustrates various lenses to conflict resolution, from conflict avoidance to physical aggression (Fig. 36). From left to right, the decision-making processes become more directive and coercive. The further to the right in the diagram, the less influence the conflict participants have on conflict management.

Figure 36. Conflict management continuum. Source: Moore (2014).

The conflict management options outlined in the continuum include:

- **Avoidance:** Acting in ways that prevent a conflict from becoming visible, maybe even to oneself.
- **Negotiation:** Voluntary process in which parties reach agreement through consensus. Consensus means a decision that all can support.
- **Mediation:** Using a third party to facilitate the negotiation process. (The mediator does not have the authority to impose a solution.)
- **Arbitration:** Submitting a conflict to a mutually agreeable third party, which renders an often-non-binding decision.
- **Judicial decision (adjudication):** Relying on a judge or administrator to make a binding decision.
- **Coercion:** Threatening or using force to impose a position.

How can you use negotiation to manage conflicts?

Negotiation styles

Out of those conflict management options we saw, negotiation is perhaps the commonly employed. Depending on the strategy and approach, several negotiation styles can be deployed by parties involved in the dispute. Holbrook (2010) **inventories four styles of negotiation** (and thus, communication) to deal with a conflict:

Negotiation

- **Performative negotiation:** Narration of high-conflict stories, speaking lots but listening little
- **Distributive negotiation:** Distribution of something of value
- **Integrative negotiation:** A mutually acceptable solution to a shared problem
- **Transformative negotiation:** To repair a damaged relationship.

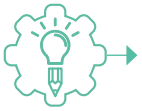
In conflictive negotiations, often each of these styles is found, sometimes overlapping. The first, **performative negotiation**, is found in the early stages in which actors need to let off steam, to express their frustrations and

anxieties. It is essential not to suppress this phase. In conflicts with a long 'shadow of the past', there may be a lot of blaming – not always related to the issue in hand – where the actors may realise deep down their behaviour is not always justified (Warner 2006). Such cathartic moments tend to reveal the 'baggage' that may have little to do with the water issue, but nevertheless needs to be acknowledged, even if it cannot be resolved in this platform. People may need to get it off their chests before they are ready to go into a more productive phase: **distributive negotiation.**

Traditionally, conflict resolution around transboundary water has involved formal (State-based) mechanisms: peacekeeping, mediation, and power politics by national governments. In principle there is also the International Court of Justice to arbitrate issues, but in international water disputes only Hungary and Slovakia (with strong facilitation by the European Union) have made use of it. In protracted conflict, these distributive forms of conflict resolution may be the best one can hope for, but they cannot hope to aim beyond 'negative peace', that is, the absence of violence.

Recognising the limitations of these instruments, contemporary forms of conflict management seek to go further. Examples include: Track II-diplomacy (negotiations by non-State or unofficial State actors), problem-solving workshops, connecting official and non-official actors, and seeking to tackle root (that is, deep-seated structural) causes that may not always be water-related. These forms of **'integrative'** conflict resolution often aim for conflict transformation, going beyond negative peace to a form of positive peacemaking, improving human security outcomes for all. The negotiation techniques outlined in the next section are intended for such instances.

If the issues can still be tackled in a relatively 'rationalist' way, accommodating different interests and perspectives, these approaches may work well. However, when emotional issues such as hurt feelings, pride, and especially damaged relationships are involved, these are unlikely to be successful, and you may need to understand more of the psychological side to arrive at 'transformative' negotiation.



Interest-based negotiation

'Interest-based negotiation' – also known as the 'mutual gains' approach – is highly suited to multi-stakeholder negotiation settings (Fisher et al., 2011; Islam and Susskind, 2011). It focuses on interests rather than positions. The intent is to reach a mutually acceptable outcome that is beneficial to all parties while protecting relationships and reputations. It recognises that parties to a dispute usually have more than one goal or concern, and more than one issue that can be addressed.

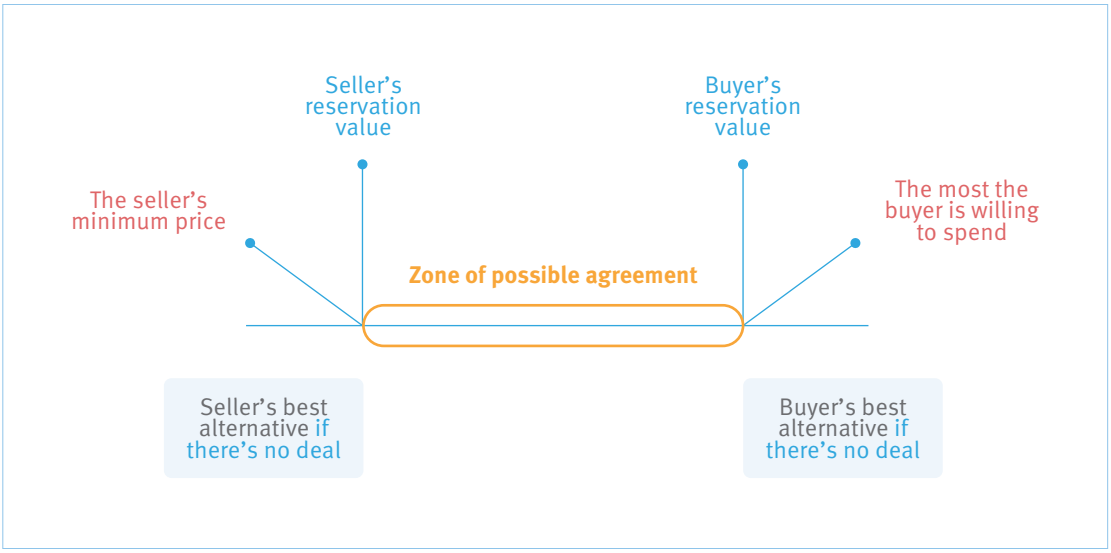
If the interests of the parties involved can be (re)constructed as mutually compatible, a transformation from conflictual to cooperative discourse is possible. This requires a skilful process of inclusive reframing. After all, negotiation is about influencing the other's perception of costs and benefits involved. Customarily, negotiation theory has assumed rationality and perfect information, which do not materialise in practice. The following concepts are some basic tools that can help you carry out negotiations based on principles:

- **BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement):** Think about the following: Do I need the other in order to reach my objective? What can I achieve if I am left to my own devices and do not negotiate – can I successfully resort to other fora to get what I need (the courts, mediation, the press)? Breaking off negotiations also has a strong symbolic meaning – theatre is part of diplomacy. Try to find out the other parties' **BATNA** and also assess your **WATMA**: the Worst Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement.

- **Zopa (Zone of Possible Agreements):** The combination of your and the opposite partner's ZOPA is the 'win-set'. By claiming issues are non-negotiable, you reduce the ZOPA and win-set. Imagine bargaining in the marketplace: you constantly frame and reframe the issue (in the case of the market, the quality and potential defects of the commodity you want to buy or sell) and the price you are willing to pay or take (see Fig. 37).

- **Reservation value:** The least favourable point (usually a number) at which one will accept a negotiated agreement.

Figure 37. Zone of possible agreement. Source: Gilbert and Rivard Piché (2022).



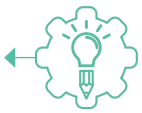
How can you promote joint visioning?

In pursuing IWRM, we cannot expect to accommodate every interest immediately (Mitchell 1990). As a result, we cannot hope to go much beyond conflict management in the short term. But if we can agree on where we want to be in, say, ten years, we can 'backcast' to what that would mean in five years from now, in two years, and so on. This creates space to accommodate differences, even large ones, in the longer run.

Joint visioning can be used as part of the conflict management process when aiming for conflict transformation. Visioning helps stakeholders align their views and develop a shared vision of the future. In doing so, people are asked to assess where they are now and where they can go from there. Visioning is usually done at the beginning of any planning process – after problem and scenario analysis and before thorough planning and decision-making with relevant stakeholders (e.g. with logical framework analysis). Visioning should always be carried out before making decisions. The triangle of truths, scenario building, and serious games are three tools that can help you build a joint visioning process both at the interpersonal and intergroup level.

Shared Vision Planning and Collaborative Modelling

Triangle of truths: Three sides of a story

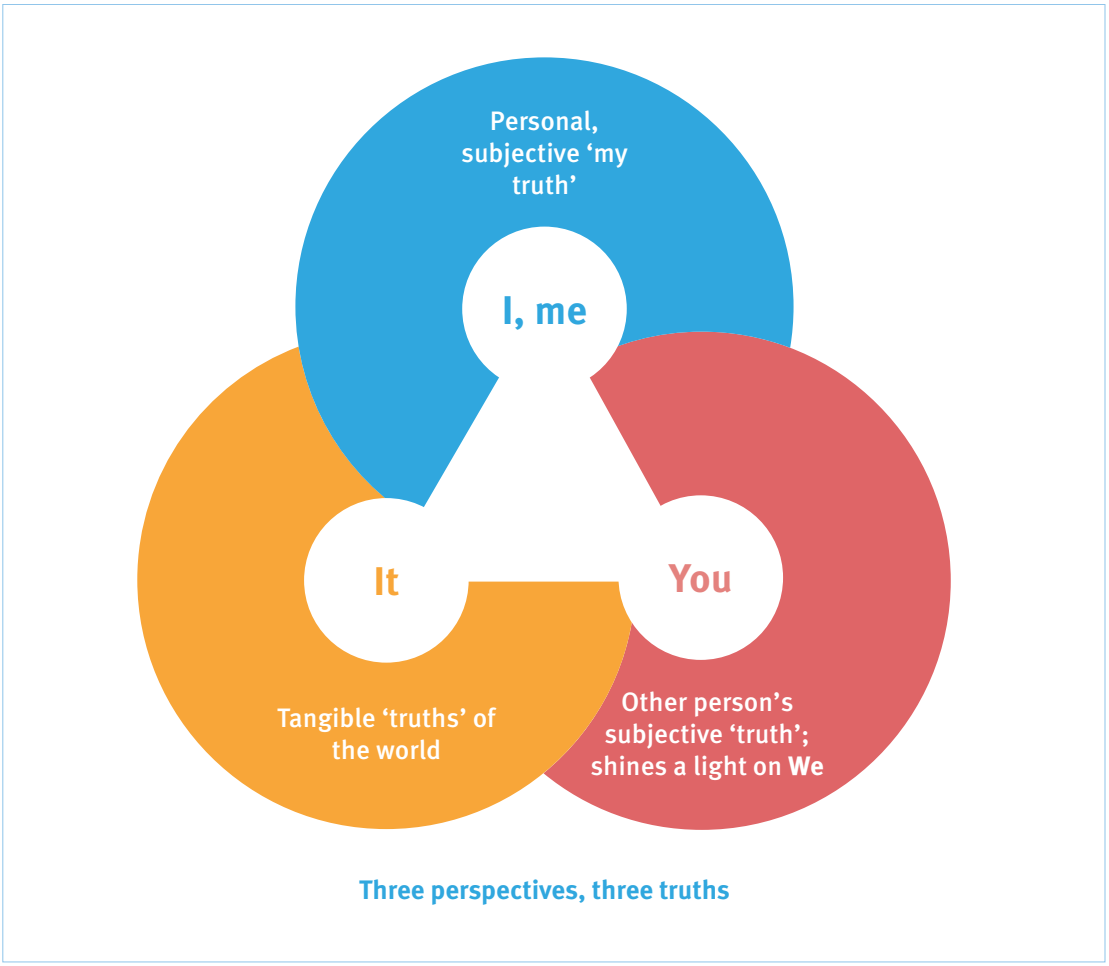


"When we agree with others, we are just listening to our own story. Our skill as communicator really shows up when we disagree with others" (Hamilton, 2013). In her book Everything is Workable, Diane Musho Hamilton presents her 'three sides of a story' approach to conflict mediation. The approach is very useful for leaders of organisations and can be applied in a range of situations: from breaking open deadlock situations to addressing simmering conflict among staff – where facts and emotions start to get mixed up in conversations (see **Chapter 5**)

See Chapter 5

The starting point is that in any situation there are three perspectives (Fig. 39). No perspective is 'truer' than the other: each one reveals a different dimension of reality. My perspective is personally valid for me ('I'). Equally, the other person's perspective is personally valid for them ('You'). The third perspective ('It') is reality viewed from a distance: facts, evidence, data, an outsider's opinion. By casting a large net over all three perspectives, we catch possibilities that we didn't see before. This perspective can help break through deadlocks. It can even be helpful to explicitly discuss the three sides of the story with those involved in the conflict. Seeing those three sides of the story sets strong foundations for developing a joint understanding and vision of where to go next.

Figure 38. Three sides of a story. Source: Salomon (2021).



Scenario building

While actors in conflict can be caught up in solving today's problems today, focusing on joint future scenarios is an excellent way to promote cooperation. Prompting people to focus on joint future scenarios to be tackled (such as climate change, demographic trends, urban transformation, new technologies), joint scenario building, backcasting, and visioning can create a pathway to cooperation. (See Box 14 which gives the example of Scheldt transboundary river visioning in van Buuren and Warner (2009)). The 'shadow of the future' may promote pragmatic rule-making to reduce uncertainty.

See Chapter 1

Realistic scenario building requires a deep understanding of current and historical trends and events. Water conflicts are often centred on challenges related to resource availability, infrastructure conditions, and societal demand (**Chapter 1**). The process of scenario building should raise awareness of uncertainties, risks, and constraints which could be encountered in the future. A scenario-building session entails four main steps: (i) brainstorming, (ii) factor classification, (iii) identification of different future states for each factor and (iv) writing down a series of narrative scenarios (Moriarty et al., 2005).

Box 14. Scheldt transboundary river visioning

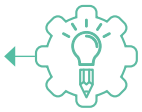
Dutch–Flemish relations in the shared Scheldt estuary go back centuries, including a painful Belgian liberation struggle. Intense discussions about a shared vision for the future have only taken place since the mid-1990s at the initiative of environmental NGOs from both sides. The cooperative MSP included stakeholders from government, business, and NGOs. Nevertheless, the atmosphere was not completely cooperative, and tensions persisted throughout the negotiations.

A twin matrix, which represented a combination of cooperation and competition or 'learning' and 'fighting', was used by van Buuren and Warner (2009) to visualise striking combinations and dynamics between conflict and cooperation that went beyond simplistic cooperation and conflict dichotomies. The study showed that conflict and cooperation occurred at multiple levels: between invited negotiators and other institutionalised actors, and between established institutions and others (citizens, the press) who may cooperate and become ambassadors for the project, but also resist and attempt to obstruct the negotiation process.

As a result, multi-stakeholder negotiations in the Scheldt have remained volatile from time to time, but for all their shortcomings, the intermittent outbreaks of conflict seem to have prepared the ground for more robust transboundary river management in the future. The relationships have often been both conflictual and cooperative, thus cautioning against placing too much hope in the multi-stakeholder process in the Scheldt.

Source: Van Buuren and Warner (2009).

Serious games



A downside of negotiation is that it normally relies on rationality – on facts and figures. In contrast, when we play a game, we also bring empathy, emotion, and ambition to the table. By immersing stakeholders in different scenarios, **serious games** can improve their understanding of other perspectives and encourage value sharing.

Serious Games

Serious games can therefore function as useful pathways for transformative conversations and ultimately for conflict resolution. They are a great way to talk about certain issues in an abstract or indirect way, which allows stakeholders to discuss problems without pointing fingers. Serious games have been developed on a variety of water management challenges, including user resource conflicts and disasters such as floods, droughts, and pollution (Aubert et al., 2018). Some games can be done in half an hour, while others may take several hours. Some examples of serious games are provided in Box 15.

Box 15. Examples of serious games in the water sector

- Aqua Republica (UNEP DHI, 2021): This game allows players to make decisions regarding sustainable water management in a river basin in situations of scarcity and increasing demand. The game environment is based on a hydrologic modelling framework.

- FLOOD-WISE (INTERREG IVC, 2021): This game is based on cross-border flood risk management. The game can be classified as a diplomatic/political game where players role-play as different stakeholders to consult, collaborate, and negotiate with one another to mitigate floods.

- Wat-a-Game (Abrami, 2012): Provides toolkits and methodological guidelines to spread awareness on hydrologic flows, through a participatory governance approach.
- Games at the World Water Day 2015 (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis [IIASA] and Centre for Systems Solutions [CSS]): UN-Water supported the 2015 World Water Day by promoting and giving access to 20 serious games covering a wide range of water and society linkages such as WASH, pollution, flood prevention, and climate change.
- SIM4NEXUS: The game increases understanding of water management, food production and consumption, energy supply, land use policies, and their interlinkages with climate action.

People often so engrossed in the game that laughter and chatter fill the room. This can provide an invaluable degree of relief in the otherwise taxing task of tackling conflict.

Takeaways

Here are some key takeaways and lessons on how to best handle conflicts in multi-stakeholder settings:

While violent conflict is rare, conflicting interests are not. Don't avoid conflict; meet it courageously!

Considering a conflict through different lenses – and assessing the type of conflict you are facing – can help determine where your MSP is best positioned to play a role.

When the interests of the parties involved can be (re)constructed as mutually compatible, a transformation from conflictive into a cooperative discourse is possible. This requires a skilful process of inclusive reframing.

Rather than focusing on water wars, think about perceptions of exclusion or mismanagement.

Be careful with issue linkage strategies: they may make things easier, but also harder and more complex.

Conflict and cooperation can alternate, or may even coincide.

There are always three sides to a story. The question is how to give each of these sides equal consideration, and how to transcend our own inevitably one-sided part of the story.

Conclusion

Synthesis of takeaways

In this sourcebook, we have discussed six ingredients that form the essential foundation for setting up an effective MSP in the water sector. While understanding that those factors are useful building blocks, it cannot be emphasised enough that there is no single blueprint for making them effective agents of change. Like for a recipe, success depends not only on the quality of the ingredients but also on the skills of the chef(s). Here is a brief recap of what we saw in each chapter:

Ingredient 1 – Context analysis: Presented elements to help you understand how to assess where you stand in your water policy context, stakeholder environment, and policy ecosystem, and how to strengthen both your platform and your position in that context.

Ingredient 2 – Setting an agenda for change: Summarised the principles and methods we can use to bring about change through collective action, from the conceptual level to practical project development.

Ingredient 3 – Knowledge management: Presented key tools and principles for implementing a learning culture in your MSP. It also showed how specific knowledge platforms can help put knowledge into practice.

Ingredient 4 – Resource mobilisation: Illustrated how to mobilise MSP resources and explained the main theoretical ideas of water financing, suggested practical ways to create MSPs to finance water and mobilise additional resources, and showed how to develop a business model for MSP sustainability. It addressed gender-sensitive budgeting and resource allocation.

Ingredient 5 – Effective communication: Focused on successful multi-stakeholder communications. It detailed how to lead multi-stakeholder interactions inside and outside your MSP.

Ingredient 6 – Conflict management: Classified different types of conflict and introduced negotiation skills. It also stressed that recognising our own conflicting attitudes and behaviours can help us manage conflict.

What now?

This sourcebook has illustrated how water-related MSPs have untapped potential to promote gender equality, enhance climate action, promote private sector participation, improve transboundary cooperation, and contribute to the overall achievement of the SDGs. They are adaptable and can be used by groups of all sizes, from small local groups to huge global conglomerates. MSPs give us the ability to step back and look at the big picture, which in turn helps us make the best decision possible.

With that in mind, you may be wondering what to do next. It is time to move from theory to application. Regardless of the stage you are at, MSPs can be used to optimise outcomes – from planning, designing, and controlling a system, to decision-making and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. It's time for action.

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Ingredients for effective water MSPs

Ingredient 1 – Context analysis: How to assess water challenges through the lens of MSPs and how MSPs can be analysed and established in a practical manner.

Ingredient 2 – Setting an agenda for change: How to prepare for making change through collective action, from a conceptual level down to hands-on project development.

Ingredient 3 – Knowledge management: How knowledge can be shared and leveraged between multiple organisations within and outside a water MSP.

Ingredient 4 – Resource mobilisation: What are the key partnership-based financing mechanisms and how to resource MSPs in the water sector?

Ingredient 5 – Effective communication: How to foster effective communications within MSPs and how to successfully engage external audiences.

Ingredient 6 – Conflict management: How to negotiate and manage conflicts and how to address common tensions that water MSPs face both internally and externally.

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