

# Multi- Stakeholder Consultation Processes for SDG 6 Monitoring



**MSPs  
FOR  
IMPROVED  
WATER  
GOVERNANCE**

## Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Processes for SDG 6 Monitoring

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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, 69 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.

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# Background and purpose



The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Support Programme assists governments in designing and implementing country-led responses to SDG indicator 6.5.1 on the degree of implementation of IWRM. It is designed to accelerate progress towards the achievement of water-related SDGs and other development goals, in line with national priorities. This directly supports the official SDG monitoring and reporting processes and should lead to measurable progress on the relevant SDG targets.

Under the guidance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and coordinated by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) in close collaboration with the UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment and Cap-Net United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Support Programme brings together a unique mix of partners in each country, representing governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector. The Support Programme is structured as follows:

**Stage 1 – Identifying challenges** through SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring results.

**Stage 2 – Formulating responses** through action plans, project documents, or similar.

**Stage 3 – Implementing solutions** that improve IWRM as a contribution to other water-related SDGs.

The purpose of this publication is to examine ways to enhance the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) for official SDG monitoring and reporting purposes. To this end, it analyses various in-country experiences in setting up MSPs for the latest round of SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries had to move their multi-stakeholder monitoring activities to an online format, though some managed to conduct in-person meetings or carry out a mix of the two formats. The three main approaches used for

multi-stakeholder consultations during the 2020 progress monitoring for SDG indicator 6.5.1 were therefore face-to-face, online, and blended. This publication offers an in-depth reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and the various tools that can be used to generate multi-stakeholder engagement for SDG monitoring. It is therefore intended to assist SDG indicator 6.5.1 focal points and those organising SDG monitoring exercises in their efforts to design and implement more effective multi-stakeholder consultation processes.

**"The three main approaches used for multi-stakeholder consultations during the 2020 progress monitoring for SDG indicator 6.5.1 were therefore face-to-face, online, and blended."**

This publication adopted a mix-methods approach. First, a desk review was performed of the official SDG indicator 6.5.1 documents from the 61 MSPs supported under Stage 1 of the Support Programme. The documents that were reviewed included: final stakeholder consultation reports for 2020, their annexes, and workshop participant satisfaction surveys. A quantitative analysis was also performed to identify trends and patterns in the number and diversity of participants across the various in-country consultation processes for SDG indicator 6.5.1. Four case studies were then selected for an in-depth qualitative analysis of MSP consultations. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with GWP regional and country coordinators and SDG 6.5.1 indicator focal points to further complement and triangulate the information collected through the desk review. The input legitimacy theory was selected as the guiding conceptual framework to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the four MSPs selected. This comparative analysis of cases studies was used to develop a series of

recommendations for enhancing the legitimacy of MSPs as a governance mechanism.

This paper is organised into five sections. The first section presents the SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring process, including stakeholder data disaggregated per region and country. The second section details the input legitimacy theory and criteria, which are then used as the analytical framework and benchmark to discuss the characteristics of each multi-stakeholder consultation process. The third section presents the case studies and provides empirical evidence of the monitoring process in the four countries, with the fourth section providing a comparative analysis of the case studies through the input legitimacy criteria. The fifth and final section brings together lessons learned on the three main approaches that were used in the MSPs for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring. While recognising that there is no single solution, this paper suggests that a blended approach (both online and in-person formats) holds great potential in terms of enhancing the inclusion, fairness, consensual orientation, and transparency of SDG monitoring exercises.





# Background on SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring





## SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey and assessment methodology

The first round of global data collection for SDG indicator 6.5.1 was established over the course of 2017 and 2018, with the second round taking place in 2020. Subsequent rounds are intended to happen approximately every three years until 2030. The SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey on IWRM implementation is measured on a scale of 0–100, based on the degree of implementation using 33 questions in a self-assessed country questionnaire, organised into the four main aspects of IWRM:

1. **Enabling environment:** The conditions that help support IWRM implementation, including policy, legal, and strategic planning tools.
2. **Institutions and participation:** The range and roles of political, social, economic, and administrative institutions and other stakeholder groups that help support implementation.
3. **Management instruments:** The tools and activities that enable decision makers and users to make rational and informed choices between different actions.
4. **Financing:** The budgeting and financing made available and used for water resources development and management from various sources.

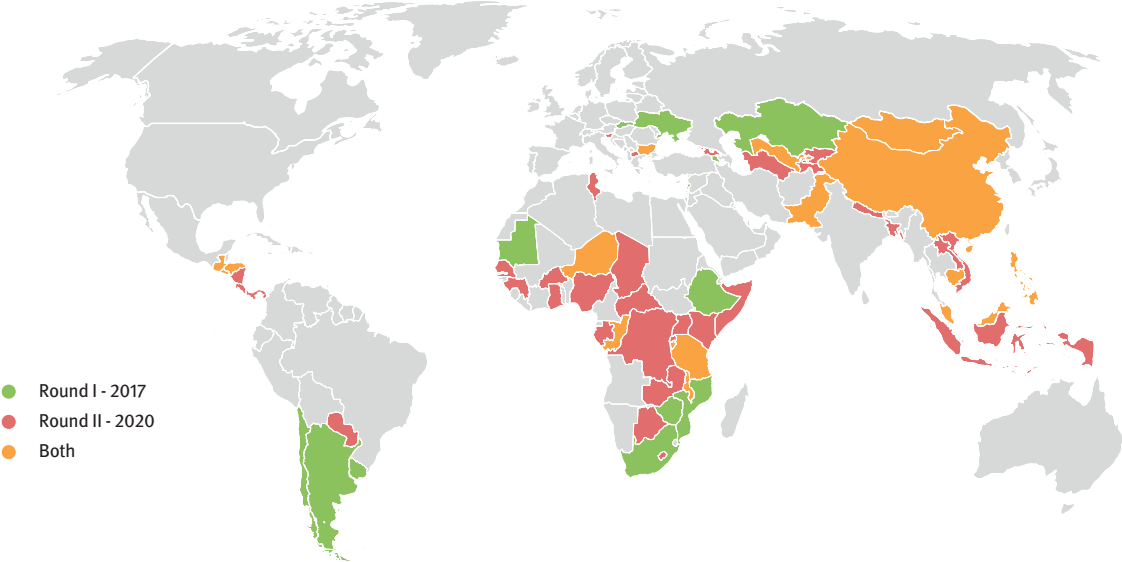
Each survey question is scored on a scale of 0–100, in increments of 10, guided by specific threshold descriptions. Each section's question scores are averaged to give averages for each of the four IWRM dimensions, rounded to the nearest whole number. These four section averages are then averaged to calculate the final SDG indicator 6.5.1 score for each country, on a scale of 0–100, also rounded to the nearest whole number.

Each United Nations Member State was invited to appoint a national focal point for SDG indicator 6.5.1, responsible for coordinating data collection and submission to UNEP, which serves as the United Nations custodian agency for SDG indicator 6.5.1. Focal points were encouraged to organise MSPs to reach consensus on the responses to each question. In the spirit of SDG 17, it has been argued that these processes establish cross-sectoral and multi-level dialogues and ensure that most key stakeholders in the country agree on responses, resulting in a more realistic assessment of IWRM implementation. The extent of and approach to stakeholder consultation is left to each country's discretion, as is relevant for their national context. As a result, there are vast differences in the way that countries conduct this data-collection process, as the diversity of consulted stakeholders and the depth of their input vary tremendously.

## Fostering multi-stakeholder processes to strengthen SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring

In both 2017 and 2020, with the aim of achieving a robust and inclusive SDG indicator 6.5.1 consultation process, GWP, through its Country Water Partnerships and Regional Water Partnerships, worked with national focal points to convene multiple stakeholders to carry out SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring. As part of the first round of SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in 2017, the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, coordinated by GWP, supported 32 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe (Figure 1) to convene 1,051 stakeholders for this purpose. In preparation of the second round of data collection in 2020, the Support Programme scaled up its reach to support 61 countries, with the active participation of over 2,500 individuals in MSPs for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring. The Support Programme provided online training for all facilitators, which included guidance on how to facilitate both in-person and online MSPs.

**Figure 1. Countries supported by the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme in conducting multi-stakeholder processes for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in 2017 and 2020**



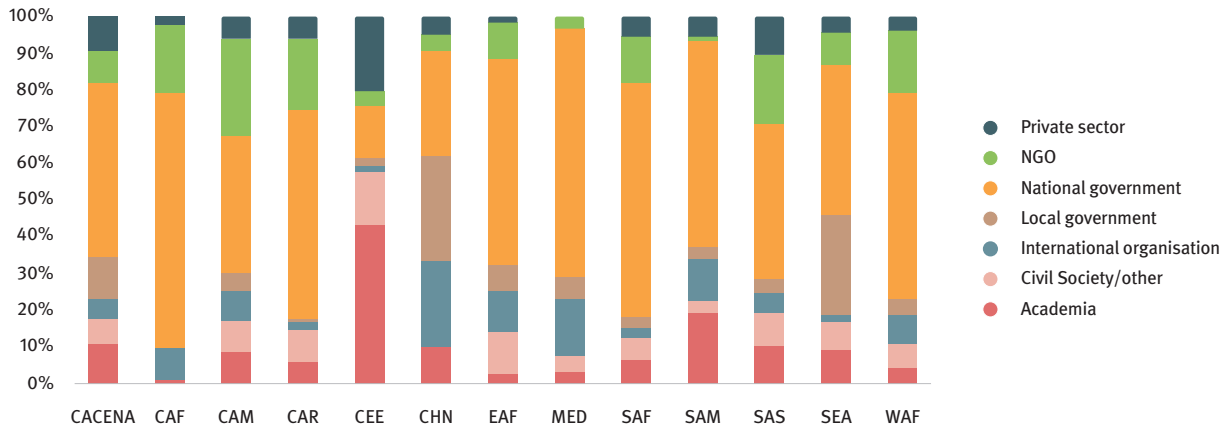
In the 2020 consultations for SDG indicator 6.5.1, an average of 42 stakeholders were engaged in MSPs per country. The country with the smallest number of participants was North Macedonia with 12 stakeholders and the largest was Paraguay with 126 stakeholders. The most represented group of stakeholders was national government representatives (48.1 percent), followed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (13.6 percent),

and local governments (9.3 percent) (Table 1). The distribution of stakeholders in the monitoring process varied across regions. For example, the share of national government representatives was 70 percent in Central Africa and just 14 percent in Central and Eastern Europe, where academics were the most represented stakeholder group at 43 percent (Figure 2).

**Table 1. Disaggregated data on multi-stakeholder participation in consultation processes**

Stakeholder group	Percentage
Academia	9.5%
Civil society/other	7.1%
International organisation	6.4%
Local government	9.3%
National government	48.1%
NGO	13.6%
Private sector	6.0%

**Figure 2. Participating stakeholder distribution in SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring by GWP region in 2020\***



\*GWP regions: CACENA (Central Asia and Caucasus); CAF (Central Africa); CAM (Central America); CAR (Caribbean); CEE (Central and Eastern Europe); CHN (China); EAF (Eastern Africa); MED (Mediterranean); SAF (Southern Africa); SAM (South America); SAS (South Asia); SEA (Southeast Asia); WAF (West Africa).

Aside from the context of a country or region, one of the most important factors that influenced stakeholder diversity was the format and methods used to generate and gather multi-stakeholder input as part of the monitoring process. For example, online consultation processes were generally more diverse compared with those that relied on the in-person workshop approach. This paper specifically aims to reveal the respective strengths and weaknesses of these various stakeholder engagement approaches. Input legitimacy criteria were selected as a benchmarking tool to compare and contrast these consultation approaches.



## Introducing input legitimacy criteria



IWRM principles strongly support public participation and multi-stakeholder collaboration in water-related decision-making processes (Agarwal et al., 2000). Despite recognising the need for public participation, water-related projects and studies often fail to critically discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mechanisms that were employed to leverage and capture multi-stakeholder input. The input legitimacy theory, derived from Scharpf's (1999, 2009) work on input and output legitimacy, offers a strong conceptual basis to unpack what constitutes an ideal democratic multi-stakeholder consultative process in the field of water governance (see, for example, Alexander, Doorn, and Priest, 2018; Marshall and De Bruyn, 2019; Otsuka, 2019). The four input legitimacy criteria, which were later suggested by Mena and Palazzo (2012), provide further operational guidance on comparing and contrasting the different aspects and democratic quality of multi-stakeholder participation initiatives. Mena and Palazzo's (2012) work argues that a legitimate input is one that exhibits the following: (1) stakeholder inclusion; (2) procedural fairness; (3) consensual orientation; and (4) transparency.



The first input legitimacy criterion, stakeholder inclusion, is crucial to ensuring a legitimate multi-stakeholder political process, as the meaningful inclusion of actors concerned with a given governance issue increases the political legitimacy of the decision-making process (Risse, 2004; Scharpf, 1999). Effective inclusion is a question of who can and should be invited and encouraged to contribute to a governance process, and who may ultimately influence decision-making. The manner in which the stakeholders concerned or affected by an issue are involved in this 'interactive governance' in a representative manner will result in a legitimacy that can help reach a solution. Political actors are more likely

to accept the legitimacy of a decision in such a context (Young, 2002). One particular challenge regarding inclusion is that it is important to bring together actors identified as the most relevant and competent (though this is somewhat subjective), rather than simply involving as many as possible. In fact, involving the 'wrong' stakeholders in the process could negatively impact the quality of the discussion, result in misinformed decisions, and decrease the efficiency of the process (Bryson, 2004).



The second criterion, procedural fairness, refers to the procedural ability of participants to influence negotiations and their outcomes. It is important that the deliberative process is designed in a way that does not marginalise any of the stakeholders included in the decision-making process. Significant legitimacy is gained when a stakeholder can actively participate in deliberations (Mena and Palazzo, 2012) and is able to articulate and properly deliver arguments to the rest of the group. For this to occur, it is necessary to take steps to correct possible power imbalances between the stakeholders within the context of the deliberation and to carry out an assessment on the rules of engagement in order to make the process as equitable and participatory as possible.



The third criterion, consensual orientation, reinforces the input legitimacy of an MSP by reflecting whether it is cooperative and allows for reasonable disagreement. Habermas (2018) refers to this type of deliberative democracy as the "force of the better argument", which relates to the willingness of the actors involved to change their positions based on convincing reasons and

to accept that cooperation is crucial for creating an efficient solution that all those involved consider to be more reasonable. In this regard, the challenge lies in the effective facilitation of meetings of actors with various cultural, academic, and/or professional or political backgrounds by promoting a procedural culture of compromise. Given the variety of interests represented, multi-stakeholder settings can sometimes be conflictual and lead to a dissensus rather than consensus, signalling that trust and communication are intrinsic elements of consensual orientation. An MSP that therefore aims to have high input legitimacy may consider socialising participants towards consensus by constructing effective communication channels within the group and facilitating trust building.



Multi-stakeholder decision-making processes require transparency to be considered truly legitimate, since the actors involved might not all have the political legitimacy of an elected body. Transparency concerns both the procedural norms of the MSP and its decisions. Regarding the former, “an institution is transparent if it makes its behavior and motives readily knowable to interested parties” (Hale, 2008:75). This has a direct influence on people’s judgement as to whether the decision-making process is democratically legitimate. Regarding the transparency of decisions in a deliberative space of governance (such as MSPs), “if a political process is more transparent, then more citizens can judge whether their preferences have been respected” (Young, 2002 in Mena and Palazzo, 2012: 544). It is important to have transparency throughout the process and in different forms, so that the actors involved have all the available information and data at their disposal, or can invite external professionals for an evaluation. Transparency in MSPs enhances accountability through revealing the nature of relationships between political actors and

civil society (Hirst, 2013), and also establishes horizontal accountability between communities (Sandel, 1998). Enhanced accountability (whether internal or external) in turn increases the democratic legitimacy of the MSP as a decision-making process.

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# Case studies of multi-stakeholder processes for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring

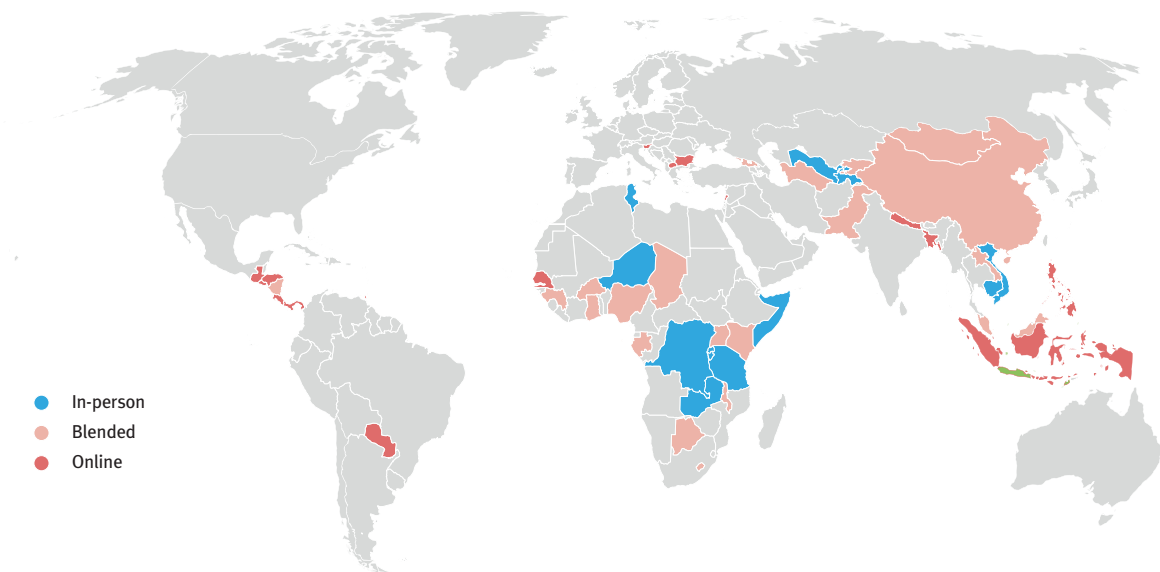




The following section provides an overall description of the multi-stakeholder consultation processes for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in four different countries. This includes invited participants, the tools and formats used to collect multi-stakeholder input, and the main discussion points during the consultation process. The case studies were carefully selected to reflect the main

methods used for multi-stakeholder consultation in the context of SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring processes (in-person, online, and blended; Figure 3). The term 'blended' refers to consultations that use both in-person and online methods to collect stakeholder input. The case studies were selected from four different continents to ensure as much cultural and socio-political diversity as possible.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3. Multi-stakeholder consultation approaches for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring by country**



### Zambia: in-person workshop approach

Zambia opted for an in-person workshop format for its multi-stakeholder SDG indicator 6.5.1 consultation process. The Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection convened a consultative stakeholder workshop from 20 to 21 August 2020. Fifty stakeholders were initially planned to be selected, but this number was reduced to 40 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health. In total,

35 participants attended the workshop on both days. Most participants were from national or local water authorities, including the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection, National Water Supply and Supply Council, Ministry of Gender, Zambia Environmental Management Agency, Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure Development, Ministry of National Development Planning, Department of Maritime and Inland Waterways, Zambia Meteorological Department, and Zambia Statistics Agency. Representatives of the state-owned Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation, one academic, NGO

<sup>1</sup> The full reports of the country consultations are available from <https://www.gwp.org/en/sdg6support/consultations/where-we-are/sdgmap/>.

representatives, and four journalists from major national news outlets (Zambia Daily Mail and 5fm Radio) also attended.

The workshops' consultative discussions were based on small group discussions. Each group was tasked with discussing all the sections and providing the score, corresponding status description, and way forward. After the completion

of each section, the respective groups were asked to provide feedback. The consensus scores were then recorded after each group's presentation. Responses for the annexes were provided during the feedback session. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Village Water (who were invited to the workshop but could not attend), completed the SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey and sent it to the focal point for consideration.

**Figure 4. In-person multi-stakeholder workshop participants for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in Zambia**



Source: Zambia Stage 1 Stakeholder Consultation Report (2020).

The issue of data sharing was one of the most heated topics during the multi-stakeholder workshop. Some stakeholders believed that data sharing must be limited to the user's specific needs (for example, if data were needed for modelling purposes, a specific period and time frame must be specified, as sharing the entire database would not be necessary), whereas others believed that data could be shared if they were not for personal gain and if the user provided feedback to the institution that provided the data, in the form of a report, findings, or a decision-making tool. Overall, participants noted significant progress in terms of IWRM implementation due to advancements related to the enabling environment and institutions and participation since the previous round of consultation in 2017.

The participants agreed upon a final IWRM implementation score of 58 percent.

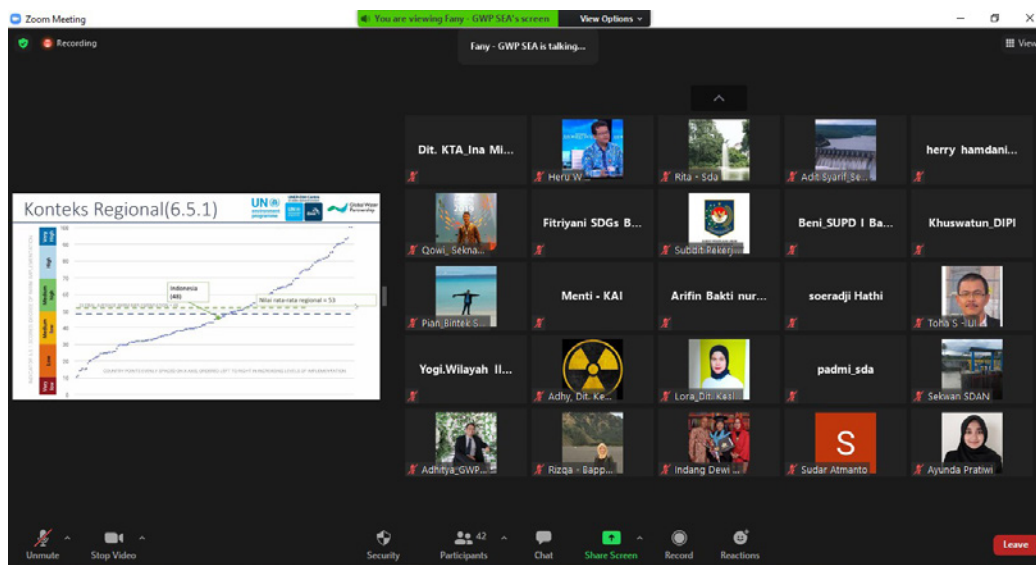
### **Indonesia: multiple online events approach**

Indonesia used a series of online events as part of its multi-stakeholder SDG indicator 6.5.1 consultation process. The stakeholders involved were mainly representatives from government bodies such as the National Water Resources Council, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Health.

The consultation processes involved the following steps: (1) appointment of the Indonesia Water Partnership (InaWP) as the consultation process facilitator; (2) participants sending their score and responses for the 33 survey questions to the facilitator (March 2020); (3) InaWP compiling the answers into a harmonised draft version of the survey (May 2020); (4) InaWP circulating the consolidated draft to participating stakeholders for feedback; (5) BAPPENAS conducting a preparatory meeting with key stakeholders (August 2020);

(6) online one-to-one discussions with key stakeholders (September 2020); (7) online finalisation workshops conducted by BAPPENAS (one for national-level stakeholders on 6 October 2020 and one for provincial and river basin stakeholders on 8 October 2020); (8) submission of the validated final draft report by InaWP to BAPPENAS (13 October 2020); and (9) BAPPENAS' review and submission of the final report to the UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment (15 October 2020).

Figure 5. Image of the online SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring workshop in Indonesia



Source: Indonesia Stage 1 Stakeholder Consultation Report (2020).

Water infrastructure developments were one of the main points discussed during the finalisation workshops. Participants highlighted the recent IWRM progress under the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020–2024, such as reservoir/dam construction and flood control and irrigation measures that considered the hydrological and ecological considerations of upstream watersheds. Participants highlighted the need for further upstream rehabilitation initiatives to protect completed water infrastructure from excessive erosion and sedimentation and thereby properly maintain the sustainability of water infrastructure. The discussions led participants to

agree upon a score of 66 percent for the level of IWRM implementation.

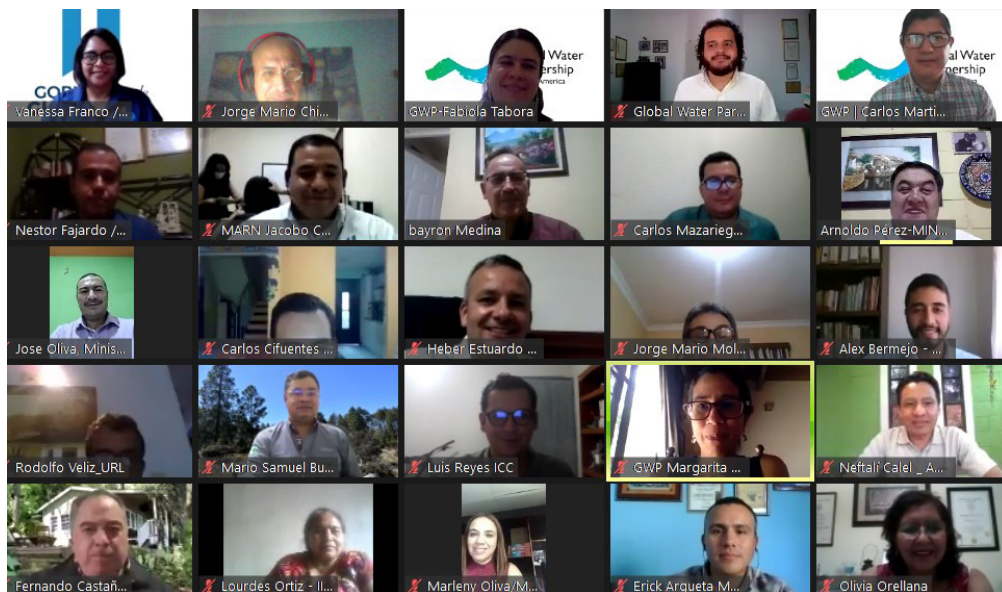
### Guatemala: online workshop approach

The consultation exercise in Guatemala was carried out through an online workshop and virtual exchanges via email before the workshop. A total of 68 participants from 40 different entities linked to IWRM in Guatemala participated in an online workshop held on 18–19 August 2020. Participants included representatives from various government institutions (the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, National

Statistics Institute, Ministry of International Relations, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, National Forestry Institute, and Private Institute for Climate Change Research), universities (Rafael Landívar University and University of San Carlos), the private sector (Laboratorio Cuatro Químicos and Anzufor), NGOs and civil society organisations (CARE, The Nature Conservancy,

the National Coffee Association, WWF, Mercy Corps, Water for People, the Guatemalan Exporters Association, the Network for Water and Sanitation of Guatemala, the Youth Water Network, and Fundación Crecer, among others), and international organisations (GIZ (German development agency) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture).

**Figure 6. Image of the online SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring workshop in Guatemala**



Source: Guatemala Stage 1 Stakeholder Consultation Report (2020).

The focal point from the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources sent the SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey to participants before the workshop so that they could familiarise themselves with the questions and methodology. The first day of the workshop was dedicated to introducing the survey in detail, which included presenting key definitions of IWRM-related terms. Participants also carried out a practical exercise using online polling.

On the second day, participants were broken down into four groups, with each focusing on a different section of the survey. The results were then presented and validated in the feedback session. The survey was sent to eight other representatives

from government institutions who were not able to attend the workshop. Some of these representatives were asked to fill in the entire survey, with others asked to complete specific sections, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which only provided input on transboundary-related aspects.

The fact that there is still no official water policy, law, or national apex body for water was one of the most highlighted points during the workshop. Stakeholders discussed the benefits that an IWRM policy and legal framework could bring, especially in terms of coordination at the national and sub-national levels. The lack of an institutional framework for transboundary water management

and cooperation was also stressed. Participants likewise agreed on the need to articulate and better integrate the SDGs, IWRM, and the indicator 6.5.1 target in particular, as part of national development agendas and instruments such as the Katún 2032 Development Plan. Overall, given this situation, the results of the exercise show that progress since 2017 was rather limited. In fact, the participants decided to give Guatemala a score of just 21 percent, which was 4 percentage points less than in the previous round.

### Georgia: blended workshop approach

Georgia used a one-day in-person workshop format combined with online prior input from participants for its latest round of consultation for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring. The workshop

was organised by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and took place on 31 August 2020 in Tbilisi. A total of 26 participants attended the event, including representatives from government institutions, civil society organisations (the National Water Partnership of Georgia, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus, Foundation Caucasus Environment, the Greens Movement of Georgia/Friends of the Earth Georgia), and the private sector (represented by Georgian Water and Power), along with gender experts (represented by the International Foundation LEA), and representatives from international organisations and projects, such as UNDP Georgia and the European Union Water Initiative Plus for Eastern Partnership Countries (EUWI+).

**Figure 7. In-person multi-stakeholder workshop for SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring in Georgia**



Source: Georgia Stage 1 Stakeholder Consultation Report (2020).

Before the meeting, the draft indicator 6.5.1 report prepared by the SDG indicator 6.5.1 focal point was translated from English into Georgian and disseminated among the participants so that they could review it and either provide comments or remarks before the meeting, or present their views

at the meeting itself. The participants were also provided with fact sheets of Georgia's previous reporting, which included the reporting results. During the workshop, each question and its score were discussed in detail and the scores were agreed upon. Few initial scores from the draft were

changed, with just some decreasing or increasing based on the consensus. The participants also provided further information for some questions.

During the discussions at the stakeholder consultation workshop, financial resources, monitoring capacity, and human resources were identified as key challenges in IWRM implementation. The participants underlined the need for framework legislation that incorporates IWRM principles. Some participants mentioned the need to establish a separate institution focused solely on water resources management, such as a water resources management agency, which is mandated to finance and implement IWRM. The participants evaluated Georgia's IWRM implementation status in 2020 at 44 percent.





## Comparative analysis using input legitimacy criteria





The aim of this section is to use the input legitimacy criteria to compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the four case studies. Overall, the MSP in Guatemala exhibits a higher level of input legitimacy for criteria 1, 2, and 4, with the MSP in Georgia scoring high for criteria 3 and 4. In comparison, the MSPs in Indonesia and Zambia exhibit lower quality across all four criteria, particularly in relation to criteria 2 and

4. Table 2 presents a summary of each country's performance across all four criteria.

This section first provides details on what an ideal MSP is in terms of each of the four legitimacy criteria, before comparatively analysing the case studies. The ideal scenario was used as a benchmarking tool to help decide criteria scores for the case studies, which were also compared against each other to inform the scoring decision.

**Table 2. Comparison of input legitimacy criteria**

Country	MSP approach	1. Stakeholder inclusion	2. Procedural fairness	3. Consensual orientation	4. Transparency
Georgia	Blended	Medium	Medium	High	High
Guatemala	Single online	High	High	Medium	High
Indonesia	Multiple online	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Zambia	In-person	Low	Low	Medium	Low

## Stakeholder inclusion

### *Key characteristics of an ideal stakeholder-inclusive process*

The inclusion criterion is a key element for any consultation and must gather all concerned stakeholders, sufficient in number and representative enough in terms of participant diversity, if it is to be effective. Water management touches many different aspects of life, so an inclusive process needs to exhibit a certain level of sectoral diversity. Reflecting that, the IWRM survey includes questions on a range of different topics (for example, gender, transboundary water issues, the private sector, vulnerable groups) that require

the participation of those groups to ensure that the country response to the SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey has legitimate representation.

Where possible, participants must not only be representatives of institutional bodies (such as state ministries and regional water authorities), but must also be from civil society, the private sector, and NGOs engaged in the field or broadly concerned by the topic of water management. Geographic diversity is an important aspect of an ideal inclusive MSP for water governance, since water resources management naturally involves decision-making at various levels (local, basin, regional, national, and international). Different genders, age groups, ethnic groups,

and traditionally marginalised groups should also be represented. This will not only impact the legitimacy of the whole process, but will also influence the efficiency of decisions made, making such representation crucial.

### ***Comparative case study analysis of stakeholder inclusion***

Out of the four multi-stakeholder consultation processes, the Guatemala case study demonstrated the highest quality in terms of sectoral diversity. The 68 actors gathered represented a wide range of organisations and a number of sub-sectors, including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), hydroelectricity, and agriculture, both at the national and sub-national levels. However, it was noted that participation from the private sector, women organisations, indigenous groups, and other marginalised populations was rather limited. The good results of the Guatemalan consultation in terms of inclusion are all the more interesting when considering that a significant proportion of those invited did not participate, with almost 100 people initially invited to attend.

The consultation process in Indonesia also demonstrated a high degree of stakeholder inclusion, with a total of 50 participants involved over two days. Although there was some representation from the private sector and NGOs, most participants were government officials (from ministries and local authorities), thus reflecting an insufficient level of stakeholder diversity. Due to the government officials' authority, budgets, and ability to implement measures, they were considered key stakeholders in the process and were also frequently consulted and solicited during the elaboration and preparation phases of the consultation, thus increasing their relevance.

This directly contrasts with the consultation in Georgia, which generally had a good level of diversity but was relatively limited in number (26 participants). At least ten people who were initially intending to participate did not do so, partly

due to the COVID-19 pandemic and partly due to the workshop's postponement. Participation of vulnerable groups in IWRM decision-making processes was raised during the discussions as something that needed to be improved, with their lack of participation in the consultation reflective of this issue.

In contrast, the Zambian consultation process did not perform as well with respect to the inclusion criteria. A relatively small number of key stakeholders (35) were invited to take part, though this limited number was due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Zambian process suffered from an over-representation of state actors, an under-representation of vulnerable groups (as acknowledged during the discussions), a lack of collaboration with civil society organisations, and a poor diversity of private actors (represented only by news media companies). Reducing the number of participants due to COVID-19 meant that actors such as WWF and Village Water Zambia were only able to participate by sending their surveys to the focal points, rather than in the consultation workshop itself.

## **Procedural fairness**

### ***Key characteristics of an ideal procedurally-fair process***

Ensuring procedural fairness is one of the main ways to enhance the input legitimacy of multi-stakeholder consultation exercises. Procedural fairness implies that each participating actor has an equal say in the process, and in turn a genuine ability to influence final outcomes. An MSP should therefore ensure that every participant has the necessary information and time to process it before engaging in the consultation process. For example, MSP facilitators can enhance procedural fairness by sending information in advance and being available prior to and after meetings for questions and clarifications to enable all participants have an equal understanding.

Spending extra time and resources on building the capacity of traditionally marginalised groups can empower them to take part more effectively, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the multi-stakeholder input. For example, pre-workshop meetings are often organised as part of collaborative hydrological modelling activities, as ‘non-experts’ may not be familiar with technical terms and jargon, but could have an in-depth understanding of the natural working of the hydrological context.

Procedural fairness also refers to whether opinions are being accounted for equally and whether the facilitation of meetings gives equitable space for all actors involved to participate. In the case of scoring exercises, such as for SDG indicator 6.5.1, all scores should be given the same weight, or at least those of individuals who are actively involved in the MSP. Within the context of the indicator survey, United Nations Member States were given the option of inviting particular stakeholder groups to participate, either just for individual questions or for the entire survey. Smaller group discussions and exercises tend to allow for marginalised stakeholders to be able to voice their concerns more freely, and are therefore also considered as representative of a procedurally fairer process.

### ***Comparative case study analysis of procedural fairness***

The analysis of the four case studies focusing on this procedural fairness criterion shows a similar trend to what was observed for the inclusion criterion. The Guatemalan consultation process appears to have been the fairest. The first day of the workshop involved explaining the workshop’s methodology and goals, as well as the SDG indicator 6.5.1 score for the previous round of data collection. This first day was an opportunity for the organising team to train all participants on the Zoom platform and to remind them of the IWRM status and the organisation of the group discussions. This made it possible for the second day – which was devoted to evaluation – to be held with the assurance that all participants

understood the details of the scoring methodology and the collection process. Another strong point in terms of fairness was that working groups were limited to four participants, which lowered the entry barrier for stakeholders that lacked confidence to speak or make important comments.

In Georgia, the SDG indicator 6.5.1 survey was emailed to relevant stakeholders selected by the facilitator for completion prior to the workshop. The other participants were invited to answer key questions only (translated into Georgian) in two attached annexes, which allowed them to provide feedback in case they were unable to participate in person. Many participants raised questions and comments before the workshop meeting, which the focal point and GWP facilitator addressed. The facilitator proposed a score based on the information gathered and SDG indicator 6.5.1 scoring guidelines, the various questions and remarks received during this preparatory stage, as well as on the scores given during the previous round of consultations. This approach responded to a problem relating to the lack of information on the 2017 consultation (and on the issues dealt with since then) and to the difficulty in interpreting different notions (such as participation of traditionally marginalised groups, whether in English or in Georgian). Although these constructive debates should be praised for their good stakeholder participation, the process may present risks in other cases if the information gathering and sharing is not carried out in a rigorous manner.

Compared with the Georgian and Guatemalan cases, the Indonesian MSP exhibited a lower level of procedural fairness, with different stakeholders involved on different days (national-level stakeholders on day one and provincial-level and river basin stakeholders on day two). This type of organisation has both strengths and weaknesses in terms of procedural fairness. For example, it could be perceived as a chance to really consider the arguments and points put forward by sub-national participants to ensure they have input in the process. It could also be used to develop

the participants' capacities, as according to the facilitator, there was a need for capacity development at the sub-national level. In this case, however, the national-level stakeholders had a stronger say in the process and their discussion set the tone for the sub-national workshop, as the sub-national stakeholders did not have access to topics discussed on the first day. The use of a Google form proved useful for the discussions, serving as a common working tool for participants to share their scores for the items discussed. Unfortunately, more in-depth discussions were only held for scores that were 20 points above or below the results from the first round of the survey in 2017, which was rarely the case.

Comparable issues were found in the Zambian case, with a noted difference in the ability of national-level stakeholders to express themselves compared with those at the sub-national level. In fact, the workshop followed a highly procedural fashion, with some actors given more space and time to raise their opinions. With regard to the discussion on stakeholder inclusion, the Zambian MSP lacked the general participation of some sub-national actors and marginalised groups.

## Consensual orientation

### *Key characteristics of an ideal consensus-oriented process*

The third benchmarking criterion used for this comparative evaluation of MSPs is consensual orientation. This concept refers to pursuing a culture of cooperation and reasonable disagreement, while acknowledging the arguments and position of the other parties during discussions. This criterion is therefore heavily interrelated to procedural fairness, since a consensus-oriented process requires affording everyone the opportunity to speak, offer criticism, and bring new arguments or information into discussions in a conducive environment. Consensual orientation is a process, rather than results-oriented criterion. The extent to which diverging opinions are reconciled is therefore

secondary to the participants' willingness to adopt – with the aid of facilitation – a collaborative and respectful mindset in approaching these differences. The role of the facilitator is therefore crucial in constructing an environment that is geared towards consensual orientation. Various methods and tactics can be employed to increase group cohesion, including trust-building exercises (such as icebreakers and energisers), focus group discussions followed by feedback sessions, or creative problem structuring methods, such as abstraction and visioning exercises or those based on Liberating Structures (McCandless and Lipmanowicz, 2014).

### *Comparative case study analysis of consensual orientation*

The consensual orientation criterion was strongest in the Georgian consultation process, which can therefore be considered an example of good practice. Participants were sent each part of the survey and annexes prior to the workshop and were invited to input their scores and make comments. The decisions for the final score were made collectively following a thorough discussion in the feedback session. Some scores changed significantly as a result of the discussions. For example, the score given for the questions on public participation at the national and sub-national levels increased after a lengthy debate on the extent to which stakeholder engagement could be perceived as participation. Out of the four MSPs, Georgia was the only case that added a specific time slot for collectively agreeing scores to the agenda. Setting aside time for debates and collective discussions encourages consensus-oriented aspects within an MSP.

The three other multi-stakeholder consultation processes were comparatively weaker in terms of consensual practice. The Indonesian workshop, which was held via Zoom, allowed for very short discussions overall, with the entire workshop lasting just 2 hours and 50 minutes. The fact that the workshop was held online negatively influenced the amount of discussion time,

though there is no detailed information on how much time was given to open comments, or what was discussed via the platform's chat function. More detailed discussions only took place when there were significant differences to the draft scores. As a result, stakeholders had limited opportunities to raise concerns during the workshop, though it should be noted that there were various opportunities outside the workshop for stakeholders to give input. To score higher in this criterion, the Indonesian MSP would need to ensure that there is a space for collective conversations to happen both before and during the workshop.

The Guatemalan MSP faced the same issues due to its virtual format and limited time to discuss topics. As a result, complementary aspects, such as follow-up actions, interinstitutional coordination mechanisms, and score refinements and justifications were not discussed in great detail. However, the organisation of the debates (small groups followed by a feedback session) did allow for particularly constructive discussions, especially around transboundary water issues. A feedback session was then organised for all participants to gain a sense of what had been the major positions and disagreements, and to be able to discuss them further.

In Zambia, the participants aimed to find consensus in the decisions made, with the use of group discussions particularly helpful in this regard. Despite the oppositions faced (for example, due to significant representation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the discussions enabled common decisions to be made on the current status in an open, non-confrontational manner. However, one particular issue of the Zambian case was that some participants could not attend the workshop (due to COVID-19), and were therefore unable to participate in the group discussions.

## Transparency

### *Key characteristics of an ideal transparent process*

Transparency is the fourth input legitimacy criterion and refers to making information publicly available to all concerned parties. In the context of these SDG multi-stakeholder monitoring processes, this entails making available the data and documents that express in sufficient detail the consultation's different stages, highlighting the debates and disagreements in a fair manner, along with the scores. If carefully followed, transparency should allow stakeholders – regardless of whether they participated in the workshop – to have a complete account of the proceedings. This therefore requires taking minutes of the meetings, sharing the agenda in advance, sharing the list of participants, communicating the meetings' results, and sharing summaries of the discussions, including what was said by whom and how the scores were compiled. The quality and depth of the final stakeholder consultation report is therefore indicative of the consultation process' transparency.

The facilitator and the SDG indicator 6.5.1 focal point must play a key role in ensuring that the transparency principle is mainstreamed throughout the MSPs. Transparency is also fundamental for building accountability and ultimately improving the quality of the multi-stakeholder consultation. Tools such as satisfaction surveys, in addition to general feedback sessions, can help provide an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the consultation process and indicate elements that need to be changed. Feedback surveys were sent to the participants in the GWP-supported consultation events.

### *Comparative case study analysis of transparency*

With regard to the input legitimacy requirement, the Georgian consultation was the best-performing case. During the preparatory phase, participants were provided with results from the previous reporting cycle, which were translated into Georgian. In terms of the consultation's final report, significant detail is given on how the meeting was conducted, the topics discussed, and any disagreements, with quotes from participants and a summary of the agreements on the country's IWRM implementation also included. A significant percentage of the participants who responded to the feedback satisfaction survey shared after the event felt that their opinions had been taken into account, as reflected in the final survey output and workshop report.

Despite difficulties in fully reviewing topics due to its virtual format, the Guatemalan consultation also stands out as a strong example of a transparent process. This is largely due to its final report, which is very thorough and enabled interested parties (both those who took part in the workshop and external actors) to remain informed about the debates. Data sharing during this consultation also helped to inform participants, allowing them to make remarks or criticisms over the two days of discussions.

In the case of Indonesia, the report did not give a sufficiently detailed account of the discussions and the manner in which they were held, nor the gains from them. This process therefore requires clarification on these organisational points, though the final consultation report recognises that it is difficult to keep track of persons involved in the first round of the survey (due to relocations, retirement, etc.) and documents. However, the procedure for collecting and agreeing on the scores was well explained, which shows some degree of transparency.

The Zambian workshop had several challenges in terms of transparency. The report does not

detail the content of the workshop's discussions, nor does it disclose whether any information was provided to the participants on the second day. The presence or absence of certain actors at the event influenced the sharing or withholding of databases (the procedural fairness indicator), which could have led to biases in the choices made. The lack of involvement of a wider range of actors may also have affected the outcome of the discussions. Some aspects of the process need to be detailed further, such as the developments of the technical working sessions, which were held a few weeks after the workshops and brought together just five individuals.





## **Summary: comparing multi- stakeholder process approaches**



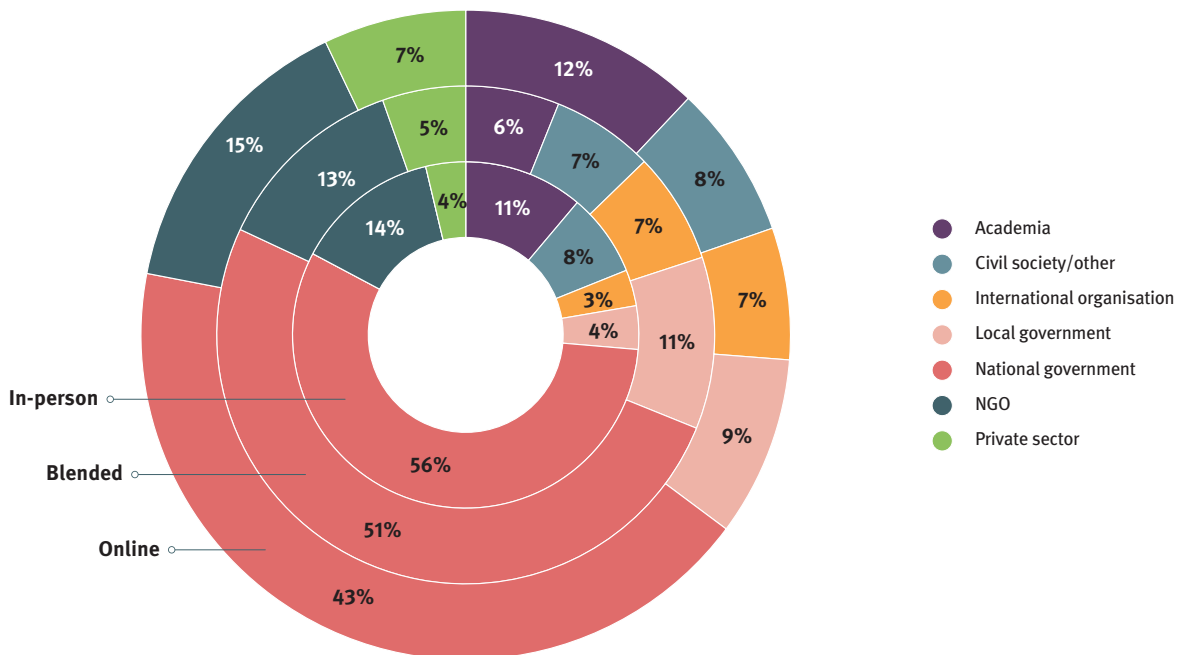


This paper has evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of SDG indicator 6.5.1 multi-stakeholder consultation processes in selected countries, using the input legitimacy concept. Four cases were presented in detail, including participants, multi-stakeholder engagement approaches, and the manner in which the consultations were carried out. It then described an ideal multi-stakeholder consultation process in terms of the four input legitimacy criteria – stakeholder inclusion, procedural fairness, consensual orientation, and transparency – which were then used as a benchmarking tool to draw comparisons between the quality of the multi-stakeholder consultations in the selected countries. This section uses the experience from these illustrative case studies to reflect upon the advantages and disadvantages of the three main engagement approaches for SDG indicator 6.5.1 consultation processes (online, in-person, and blended).

## Online

The online engagement approach offered clear advantages in terms of stakeholder inclusion and transparency. The analysis showed that both Guatemala and Indonesia (which carried out their consultations online) have a more diverse set of participants than the other two countries. Cumulative data for the multi-stakeholder consultations held for the most recent round of SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring confirms this trend, revealing the online format to be significantly more diverse than blended or in-person discussions (Figure 8). This format allows for better inclusion and representation, since it brings together a more varied set of participants who are not necessarily based in the same geographic location, especially those based outside capital cities where in-person consultations typically take place. It also improves the participation and contribution of some individuals and organisations, as well as networking opportunities between them.

**Figure 8. Share of participants by engagement approach**



However, online consultations do not seem to allow for an in-depth discussion of topics. The manner in which speakers are appointed and time is allocated for their presentations requires further analysis. The digital divide is also an important point to consider. Access to a reliable internet or phone connection can depend greatly on factors such as geographic location or financial status and is a potentially discriminating factor in online consultations. With regard to consensual orientation, fully virtual events may therefore raise issues concerning their capacity to encourage constructive debates. However, online tools such as small virtual breakout rooms and polling have untapped potential and could be used more. In terms of transparency, online MSPs have some positive aspects, such as functions to save chats and poll results and record the entire session easily at no additional cost. The MSP facilitator should make these recordings easily accessible to all interested parties.

### **In-person**

The in-person engagement approach presents some potential drawbacks in terms of inclusion, but offers clear advantages over the online and blended formats regarding procedural fairness and consensual orientation. One obvious limiting factor with the in-person format is that some individuals may not be able to attend the event if they are based far from the workshop location or cannot afford to be absent from work. However, in-person formats can be favourable for discussions and qualitative debates, for example, through groupwork sessions. In-person interaction through informal discussions during coffee breaks, for instance, can significantly help the MSP's consensual orientation by fostering trust among participants. Although breakout group discussions are possible during an online consultation event, in-person workshops appear to be more conducive to developing in-depth discussions while also allowing some individuals to speak with greater ease, thus enhancing the quality of the engagement from a fairness perspective. In terms of transparency,

the in-person format does not differ significantly from other participation approaches. However, unlike online events, in-person workshops are rarely recorded, which means that the level of information on the consultation process depends on the thoroughness of the note taker. Similarly, the quality and depth of the information provided in reports depends more on the MSP's facilitator and the focal point, rather than on the consultation format itself.

### **Blended**

The blended format can draw from the strengths of both in-person and online formats and therefore has the potential to be the most legitimate approach for generating and gathering stakeholder input. For example, a blended format can be used to enhance stakeholder inclusion when some stakeholders are unable to attend an in-person meeting being held. Another option could be to hold an online meeting with some stakeholders, with others attending an in-person meeting. Of course, this could create procedural fairness issues, as the views of in-person participants may take precedence over those attending online. One way of rectifying this potential pitfall would be to use online polling (as used in the Indonesian case), which would give equal weight to the scores of those participating online and in person. The type of blended format also has the potential to enhance consensual orientation. The Georgian two-step process is a good example of this, which saw participants first complete the survey and return it to the focal point, before discussing the scores in detail. As the Guatemalan and Indonesian cases have shown, multi-stakeholder consultations held fully online are very limited in terms of consensual orientation. With regard to transparency, blended formats could enhance the legitimacy of multi-stakeholder input by making discussions publicly available, either through recording sessions or broadcasting them (or parts of them) online.





## Key lessons and recommendations



### Approach

MSP facilitators and SDG indicator 6.5.1 focal points should have a clear understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the three main multi-stakeholder consultation approaches (Table 3). For example, switching from an in-person format to an online format is likely to have a positive effect on stakeholder inclusion, but may negatively impact other aspects, such as the depth of discussions, thereby reducing the consensual orientation of the consultation process. Although the blended format has potential advantages, it is important to remember that there are several types of blended consultations, for example, in-person workshops with online input from those not

attending, a series of online consultations combined with in-person events (as in the case of Georgia), and consultation sessions that have both in-person and online participants. When designing a blended MSP consultation process, facilitators should carefully consider how a mix of in-person and online formats will impact the overall legitimacy of the multi-stakeholder input. Furthermore, facilitators should always consider the country context and adapt the approach to local situations and constraints. For example, in-person workshops that involve a large group of stakeholders may become too expensive to carry out. Similarly, online consultations may simply be impossible in some countries due to limited internet connectivity.

**Table 3. Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of multi-stakeholder process approaches**

Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
<b>Online</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced stakeholder inclusion (greater diversity in terms of scale and sectors represented).</li> <li>High degree of procedural fairness if online polling is used to collect scores.</li> <li>Sharing of data and monitoring documentation beforehand strengthens procedural fairness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet connectivity and limited ITC skills and knowledge may reduce stakeholder inclusion.</li> <li>Time constraints and a lack of interaction among stakeholders inhibits consensual orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased consensual orientation via the use of breakout rooms and chat functions to enhance sharing among participants.</li> <li>Recording and sharing of events publicly holds great potential for increased transparency.</li> <li>Capacity development of traditionally marginalised stakeholders through one-to-one exchanges can boost procedural fairness.</li> </ul>

Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
<b>In-person</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer sessions encourage in-depth discussions and foster trust building among participants which can enhance consensual orientation.</li> <li>• Smaller groups and feedback sessions boost procedural fairness and transparency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited inclusion of geographically remote stakeholders.</li> <li>• Possible difficulties in maintaining a consensus-oriented process with a large number of participants.</li> <li>• Often more expensive than an online consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of participatory tools to foster the engagement and input of traditionally marginalised groups.</li> <li>• Consultation events can be held over several days rather than one-off events to foster engagement and consensual orientation.</li> </ul>
<b>Blended</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced stakeholder inclusion by providing those who are unable to attend with the opportunity to join the event online instead.</li> <li>• A space for in-person discussions during and after the consultation event enhances consensual orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to manage procedural fairness for joint online and in-person events as remote participants are at a disadvantage compared with those physically attending the session.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater use of online tools such as polling or shared documents to support in-person events can enhance procedural fairness.</li> <li>• In-person workshops could be recorded and/or broadcasted live to enhance transparency.</li> </ul>

### Timing

In addition to choosing an engagement approach that best fits the purpose and local context, those organising multi-stakeholder consultation processes should also carefully consider time aspects, i.e. the length of the sessions and to the overall engagement period. Workshop events that take place over several days rather than a few hours are generally better in terms of consensual orientation, as this gives stakeholders more time to discuss their perspectives and hopefully build a sense of mutual understanding and trust. Longer workshop events may allow for several groupwork activities, which is likely to enhance procedural

fairness. However, lengthier consultation events mean inclusion is likely to be impacted, as some stakeholders may not be able to commit to the amount of time required. The overall engagement period during of the multi-stakeholder consultation is an equally important factor to consider. In Indonesia, the consultation process took place over a six-month period, while in Georgia, the process took just one day, with each process experiencing its own set of challenges. For example, in Indonesia, some participants dropped out of the process, and it became very difficult to ensure proper follow-up was taking place, whereas in Georgia, the fact that it was a

one-off event meant that it was limited in terms of consensual orientation.

### *Facilitator*

Facilitators have a significant role in MSPs and efforts should therefore be made to help them coordinate legitimate consultation processes more effectively. As discussed previously, facilitators are responsible for choosing the consultation approach, the stakeholders to be invited to the consultation process, the time allocated to activities, the overall agenda, and the tools used to mobilise stakeholders and gather their input. These choices cannot be improvised and require preparatory work and attention to detail. Facilitators can use stakeholder mapping and power analyses to better inform themselves and help them make appropriate design choices. Reading previous consultation reports and conducting policy analyses can also be used to help facilitators identify potential areas of contention and become more aware of the local context. Contact with participants prior to and after the consultation sessions (for example, via introductory emails, preparatory calls, and follow-up surveys) are good practices that can support facilitators in getting to know the variety of stakeholders and adjusting the consultation process as necessary.

A good facilitator requires a certain set of soft and technical skills to perform the three main purposes of facilitation: (1) facilitate – making the process easier for the group; (2) animate – making the session lively and ensuring it moves at a good pace; and (3) moderate – managing the relationship among participants (see Box 1). Facilitating skills are partly inherited but can also be developed through training and with experience over time. Training on Liberating Structures, for example, can help facilitators become more familiar with the range of participatory tools and techniques that can be used in different contexts to generate collective insights. With the digital transition, facilitators should also consider training on how to use

online tools and platforms to support facilitation. Facilitation skills take time and practice to develop, so facilitators should try to gain as much experience and exposure to different formats and groups as possible. Working in collaboration with other facilitators is also a good way to improve facilitation, animation, and moderating skills. To summarise, choosing the appropriate format, managing balanced engagement, and having well-equipped facilitators are the three key elements needed to carry out inclusive, fair, consensus-oriented, and transparent MSPs.

## Box 1. Key features of a good facilitator

### **Facilitate:**

- Conducts in-depth preparatory work to gather insight on the topics at stake and the participants in order to select the appropriate engagement approach and tools for the group activity.
- Ensures time-keeping and refocuses collective attention to meet the expected outcomes of the meeting.
- Reformulates and connects different ideas together towards a shared vision.

### **Animate:**

- Can improvise to avoid awkward silences during a meeting (for example, due to a technical difficulty).
- Has a good sense of humour and combines playfulness whenever appropriate.
- Has strong emotional intelligence and is good at sensing the mood of participants.

### **Moderate:**

- Creates safe spaces and encourages everyone to express their views freely.
- Remains neutral by giving participants an equal opportunity to voice their concerns and be heard with respect.
- Does not let their own opinions impact the consultation process.
- Is skilful at diplomacy and is able to intervene if an individual or group of individuals is monopolising the space and discussion.

Source: Adapted from Bolliger and Zellweger (2007).







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