



Global Water
Partnership

Brief for SDG 6 practitioners
Best Practices and Tactics

ENHANCING MULTI- STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESSES FOR SDG 6 MONITORING

Full report
available [here](#)



About this brief

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water and sanitation (SDG 6), which has a specific target on enhancing the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) (SDG 6.5). Progress towards achieving SDG target 6.5 is measured by two indicators, one of which is 6.5.1: Degree of integrated water resources implementation (0–100). SDG indicator 6.5.1 monitoring is carried out through appointed focal points from national governments, who are responsible for completing a survey on the degree of national IWRM implementation. To gather a variety of views to input into the survey, local focal points should set up multi-stakeholder consultations.

Based on the experience of the 61 countries that have conducted multi-stakeholder consultations for SDG indicator 6.5.1, this document **makes recommendations on how to enhance their effectiveness through ensuring the following input legitimacy criteria:** (1) stakeholder inclusion; (2) procedural fairness; (3) consensual orientation; and (4) transparency. It also **provides a detailed comparative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses for the three main consultation approaches** employed to generate and gather multi-stakeholder input for the survey: (1) in-person workshops; (2) online forms and events; and (3) blended in-person and online consultations.

Why are multi-stakeholder processes important for SDG monitoring?

Ensuring robust and inclusive consultation processes for SDG indicator 6.5.1 improves the accuracy of monitoring and reporting on the current status and progress of IWRM. Effective MSPs can also improve trust, generate consensus, and enhance information sharing and communication between relevant actors, which ultimately enhances IWRM.

How can the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder processes be improved?

Though MSP effectiveness is context dependent, it can be assessed according to four input legitimacy criteria:

- **Stakeholder inclusion:** ensuring the right people are asked the right questions at the right time.
- **Procedural fairness:** ensuring that the way data are gathered is fair and efficient.
- **Consensual orientation:** ensuring that people engaged in the process are willing to listen to others and build mutual understanding, potentially towards reaching consensus.
- **Transparency:** ensuring a degree of openness about the process and how the information gathered will be used.



Stakeholder inclusion

Who is and should be invited and encouraged to contribute, and can ultimately influence decision-making?

- **Ensure sectoral diversity** by including **representatives** from **different sectors and ministries** and **take into account different sub-sectors** that are included within the IWRM survey (e.g. gender, transboundary water issues, the private sector, vulnerable groups).
- **Ensure geographic diversity** to reflect that decisions are made at various levels (local, basin, regional, national, and international).
- Ideally participants should **include representatives from public bodies** (such as state ministries and regional water authorities), **civil society, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations** engaged in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities.
- **Participants should also be diverse** in terms of gender, age groups, ethnic groups, and traditionally marginalised groups.



Procedural fairness

What is the procedural ability of individual actors to influence negotiations and outcomes?

- **Ensure that every participant has relevant information before engaging in the consultation process.** Send information in advance and be available prior to and after meetings for questions and clarifications.
- **Strengthen the capacity of traditionally marginalised groups** to empower them to participate effectively. For example, pre-workshop meetings can be organised for ‘non-experts’ to become familiar with technical terms and jargon.
- **Consider longer workshop events and/or engagement periods**, as this may provide **more opportunities for stakeholders to raise their issues and priorities** during discussions. However, understand that that this could have detrimental effects on inclusion, since some stakeholders may not be able to commit to the amount of time requested.



Consensual orientation

Does the MSP foster a culture of cooperation and reasonable disagreement?

- **Create an environment geared towards consensual orientation** by using various methods to increase group cohesion, e.g. trust-building exercises, focus group discussions followed by feedback sessions, or creative problem structuring methods such as abstraction and visioning exercises or those based on [Liberating Structures](#).
- **Consider holding workshops over several days** rather than a few hours or longer consultation engagement periods **to give stakeholders more time to share their views** and build a sense of mutual understanding and trust.



Transparency

Are processes and decisions defined and made in a transparent manner?

- **Make available the data and documents that express**, in sufficient detail, **the different stages of the consultation**, highlighting debates and scoring in a fair manner.
- **Share the agenda in advance**, take minutes of the meetings, note who took part, communicate the meeting outputs and share summaries of the discussions, including what was said, by whom, and how the scores were compiled.
- **Use tools** such as satisfaction surveys, in addition to general feedback sessions, **to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the consultation process** and how they can be made more effective.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different consultation formats?

To ensure the most effective consultation approach, SDG indicator 6.5.1 facilitators and country focal points should not only factor in the local context, but also the respective strengths and weaknesses of the different consultation approaches.

In-person

In-person engagement offers clear procedural fairness and consensual orientation advantages over the online and blended formats. However, it also presents some potential drawbacks in terms of inclusion.



Input legitimacy criterion	Strengths 	Weaknesses 
 Stakeholder inclusion		Potentially limited inclusion of geographically remote stakeholders, unless additional support, including technical and financial support, can be made available.
 Procedural fairness	In-person workshops are generally longer and appear to be more conducive to developing in-depth discussions, whether they are in parallel or in a series, formal or informal, while allowing some participants to speak with greater ease.	
 Consensual orientation	In-person consultation events over several days can encourage in-depth discussions and foster trust building among participants, which enhances prospects for consensual orientation.	However, maintaining a consensus-oriented process with a large number of participants may be more difficult.
 Transparency	Recording and/or live broadcasting in-person workshops can enhance transparency.	Unlike online events, in-person workshops are seldom recorded, which means that the depth of information on the consultation process depends on the thoroughness of the note taker and the extent to which notes are shared with participants and non-participants.

Online

Online engagement offers clear potential advantages in terms of stakeholder inclusion and transparency, but fully virtual events may prevent constructive discussions.



Input legitimacy criterion	Strengths 	Weaknesses 
 Stakeholder inclusion	<p>Can bring together a more varied set of participants who are not necessarily based in the same geographic location, especially those based outside of capital cities.</p> <p>Improves the participation of some individuals and organisations.</p>	Access to a reliable internet or phone connection depends on factors such as geographic location or financial status and can be a potentially discriminating factor in online consultations.
 Procedural fairness	If online polling is used for scoring, procedural fairness can be strong.	Without adequate capacity development and/or empowerment, traditionally marginalised stakeholders may not speak up during online consultations and thus may not be heard adequately.
 Consensual orientation	Good use of online functions such as breakout rooms and chats can enhance sharing among participants.	Time constraints and a lack of space for interaction among stakeholders in an online setting can inhibit in-depth discussions of topics, thus affecting consensual orientation.
 Transparency	Available functions such as saving chats and poll results and recording sessions can be done easily at no additional cost and can greatly enhance transparency.	

Blended

The blended format can draw from the strengths of both in-person and online formats and has the potential to be the most legitimate approach for gathering multi-stakeholder input. Blended consultations can take several formats, for example: (1) in-person workshops with online input from those not attending; (2) a series of online consultations mixed with in-person events; and (3) sessions with both online and in-person participants. When designing blended MSPs, facilitators should carefully consider how the format will impact the overall legitimacy of multi-stakeholder input.



Input legitimacy criterion	Strengths 	Weaknesses 
 <p>Stakeholder inclusion</p>	Can enhance stakeholder inclusion by allowing those unable to attend to join the event online instead.	The same potential drawbacks as in-person or online consultations may apply to participants taking part through those approaches.
 <p>Procedural fairness</p>	Further integration of online tools such as polling or shared documents to support in-person events can enhance procedural fairness.	Holding a joint online and in-person event can create disadvantages for remote participants to be heard compared with those physically at the event.
 <p>Consensual orientation</p>	Providing a space for in-person discussions during and after the consultation event can enhance consensual orientation.	
 <p>Transparency</p>	<p>Online consultations can be recorded and easily shared, thus increasing transparency.</p> <p>Recording and/or live broadcasting in-person workshops can also enhance transparency.</p>	

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