



Who understands systems? Civil society, the WASH sector and social transformation

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Scale and Sustainability

A system is not a specific intervention, but a philosophy of action or way of working that recognises complexity and the inter-linked nature of the real world

A. Huston & P. Moriarty, IRC Working Paper, Building strong WASH systems for the SDGs, Understanding the WASH System and its building blocks, 2018

Why
systems?

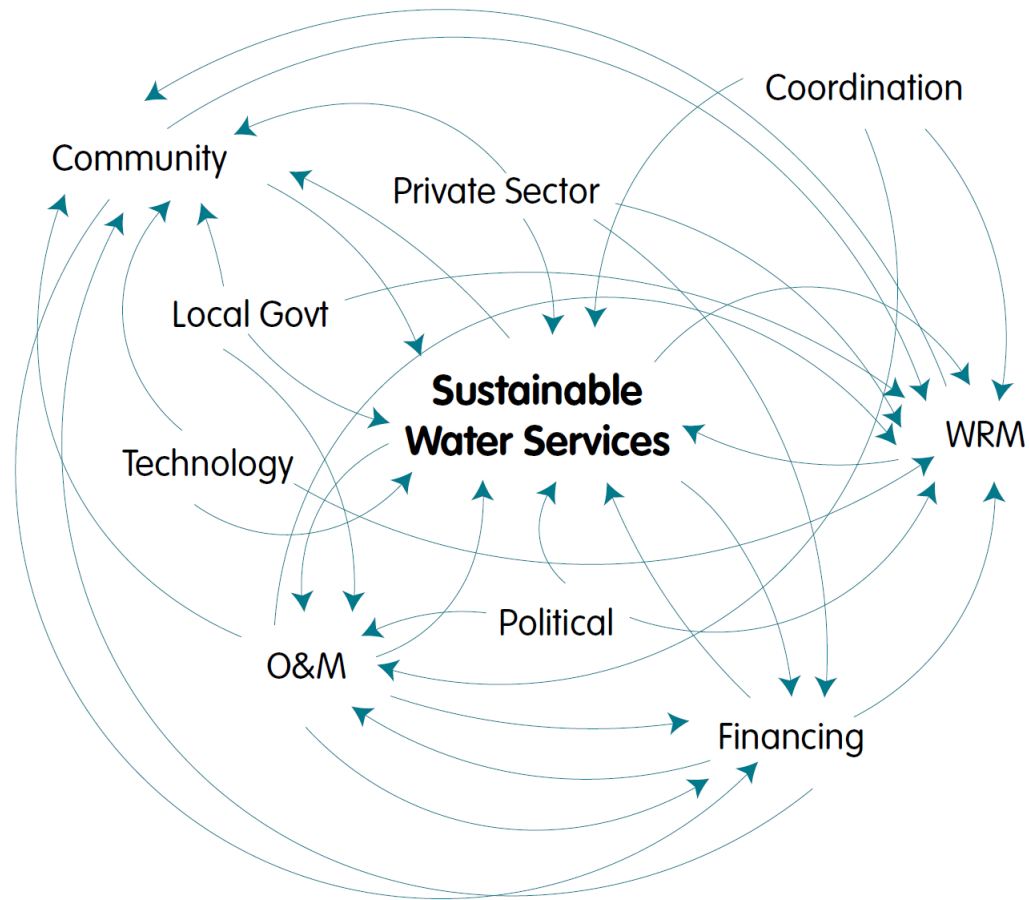


Kathmandu Systems Strengthening Regional Learning Event



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What does
the system
look like?



Valcourt et al. 2018, cited in Huston and Moriarty, IRC Working Paper, Understanding the WASH System and its building blocks.

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Research questions

1. How did systems thinking influence project designs for Water for Women partners?
2. What ambitions do Water for Women partners have for creating systems change?



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Methods

- Analysis of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) project design documents
- Learning Events to explore and share Systems Strengthening approaches
- Analysis of CSO progress to outcome reporting
- Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)—use of a common systems framework



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Findings | project designs

- New for most—only one of ten partners used a formal approach to systems
- Lack of clarity on where the private sector fits in the WASH system
- CSOs largely focused on the government levels where they can create the most change
i.e. national versus sub-national
- Diversity of approaches within CSOs



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Findings— project designs

One partner's building block framework (WaterAid, PNG)

| | Weak | Limited | Moderate | Strong |
|----------------------------|------|---------|----------|--------|
| Planning | ★ | → | | |
| Coordination | ★ | → | | |
| Financing | | ★ | → | |
| Service delivery | | ★ | → | |
| Institutional arrangements | | ★ | → | |
| Monitoring | ★ | → | | |
| Accountability | | ★ | → | |



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Sanitation and Water for All – sector building blocks



<https://www.sanitationandwaterforall.org/priority-areas/building-blocks/>



Findings | aspirations

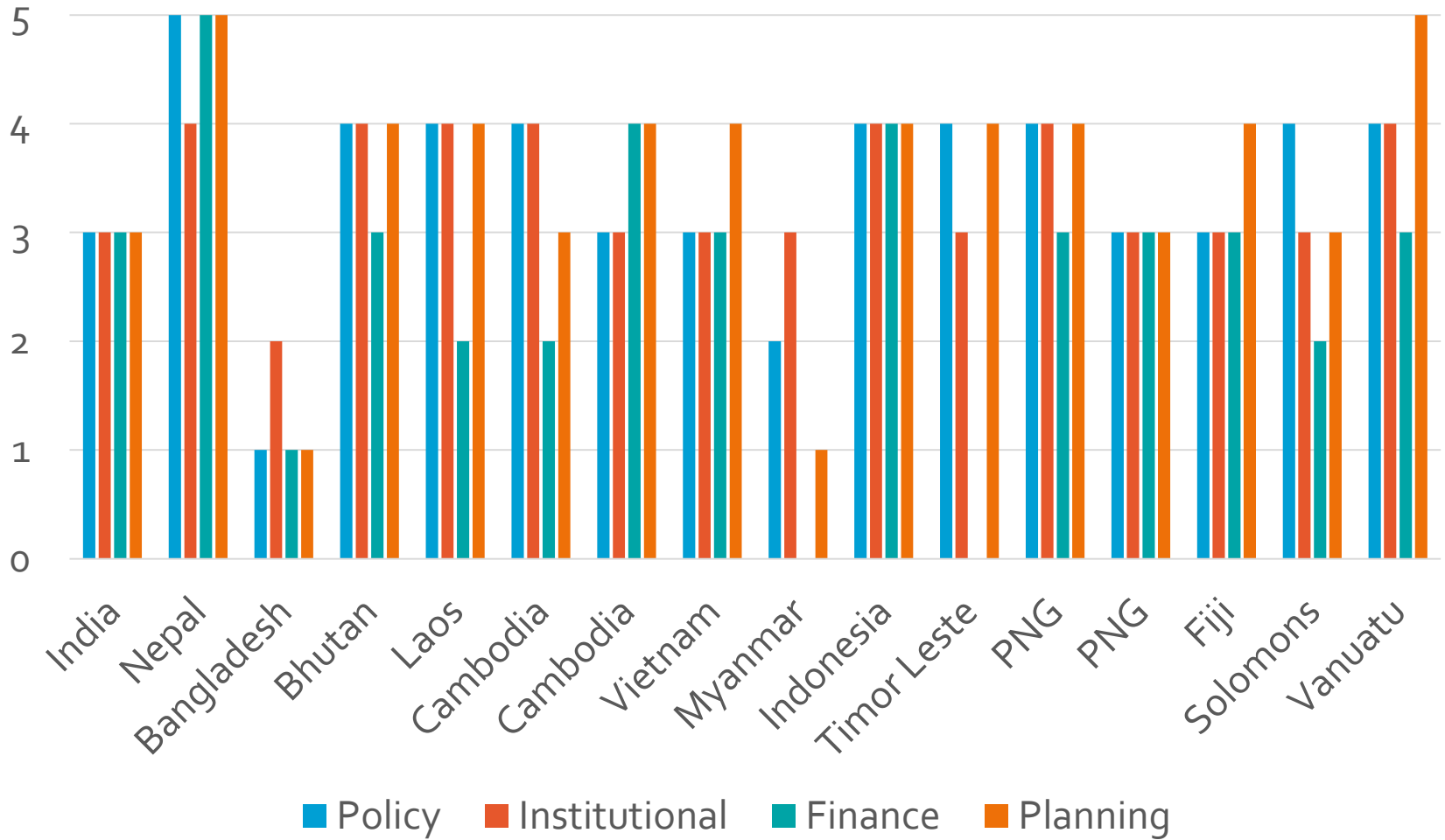
We asked partners:
*How much change do you expect to
generate in each SWA block?*

Expectations?
*Variation within each project
Modest expectations for change*



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Expected change by project



Implications

Boundaries and Levers —is what's manageable also what's useful?

Private sector – how do we engage with it in the broader WASH system?

Transformation—can CSOs play a leading role on GSI?

Emerging understanding—will this help us perform better?



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