



# 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?

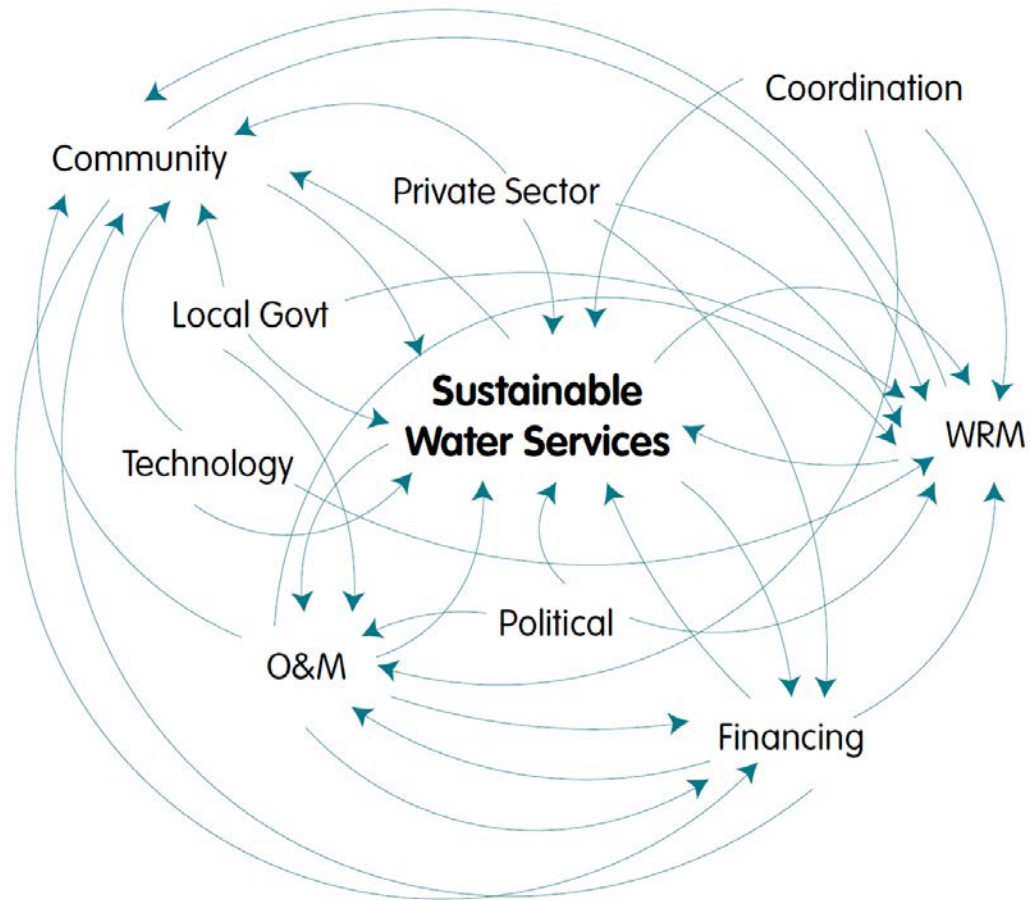


Kathmandu Systems Strengthening Regional Learning Event



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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

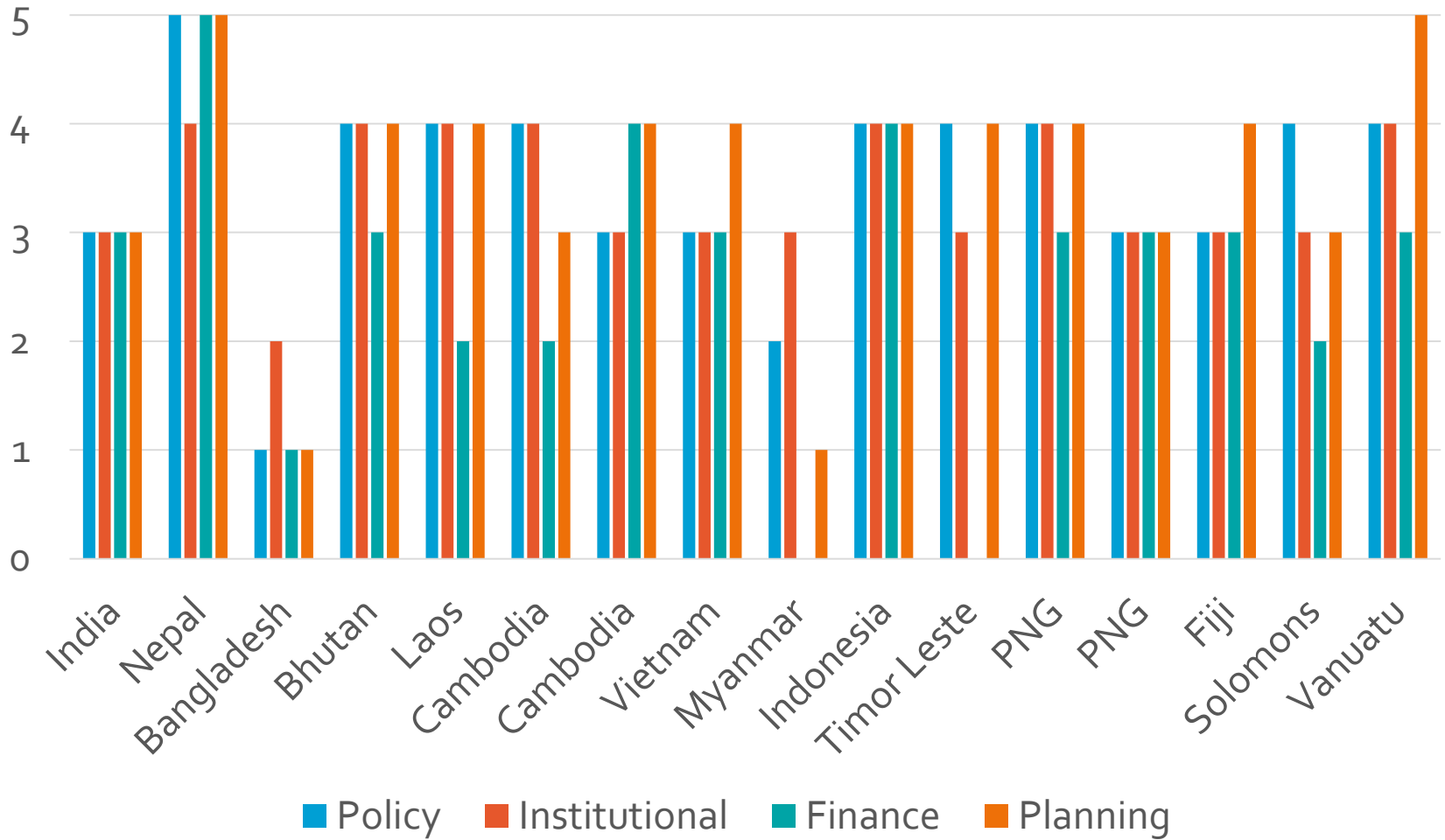
We asked partners:  
*How much change do you expect to  
generate in each SWA block?*

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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