

# Partnership toolkit

Guidelines on working effectively with partners

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**WaterAid**

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# What is in this guide?

Working in partnership is central to WaterAid's vision of a world where everyone, everywhere has access to water and sanitation. We will only achieve our vision and mission through collaborating with a wide range of partners, from government, civil society, academia and the private sector, to improve policy and practice relating to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

The focus of partnerships goes beyond short-term project deliverables. We aim to strengthen the institutions, systems and capacities that are needed to deliver sustainable WASH services in the long term. To achieve this, we need to develop enabling and empowering relationships that support our partners to strengthen their capacity to deliver sustainable WASH – as articulated in **WaterAid's Partnership framework**.

This toolkit provides practical guidance on good partnership practice that should be relevant for all staff across WaterAid.

The short sections set out key considerations of partnerships, through the different phases of assessment and selection of partners, to planning projects collaboratively, monitoring and supporting partners, along with exit and transition strategies.

► **Martin, a sanitation engineer with Water for People Uganda, training people previously involved in illegal pit latrine emptying in using the safe method of the gulper, Kibuye Parish, Kampala, Uganda. August, 2018.**

There are also sections to promote good relationships, including governance and accountability, communication and negotiation, conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms, and measuring success in partnerships. The final section looks at good practice for working with different types of partners, such as governments, academic institutions and organisations representing people's rights. This toolkit should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

## **The Guidelines on Finance Partnership:**

*Guidelines on Finance Partnerships* provides more detail for finance staff on how to manage risk in partnerships without being overly controlling, in a way that is relevant to the different levels of risk associated with different partners and types of partnerships.

**The Partnership framework:** WaterAid's *Partnership framework* defines our position, approach and programme standards in relation to our work with partners. This toolkit provides more detail on how to apply it in practice.



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

# Acknowledgements

This is an updated version of the original WaterAid Partnership toolkit from 2014. It builds on the work and experience of many people in WaterAid and other organisations, including Keystone Accountability, Mango and BOND. This toolkit seeks to address challenges that were raised as part of a series of reviews of partnership in WaterAid country programmes (CPs) carried out over several years. The partner feedback surveys conducted for WaterAid by Keystone Accountability in 2014, 2016 and 2019 also gathered insights from our partners that have enriched this toolkit.

Tracey Keatman from Partnerships in Practice (PiP) (formerly BPD) and Thérèse Mahon led much of the original work on which this toolkit is based. Since its first edition, many others in the organisation have contributed tools, time, experience and critical analytical thinking on partnerships, including Adeola Akintoye, Shamila Jansz, Alpha Traore, Pascaline Lamien,

Bethlehem Mengistu, Thida Seng, Saheed Mustafa, Aditi Chandak, Tigist Tefera, Meselech Seyoum, Shibabaw Tadesse, Mariame Dem, Christine Babin, Mark Lomas, Emily Wilton, Anne Mutta, Francis Musunguzi, Lydia Zigomo, Joe Lambongang, Samantha French, Elijah Adera, Munawar Hasan, Tommy Ka Kit Ngai, Eleanor Lucas, Natasha Scott, Tidiane Diallo, Frances Kelsey, Ben Robinson, Samir Hafiz, Leigh Heale and Aftab Opal, and various participants in the PiP training programme have contributed through their experience and analysis.

Any weaknesses in the framework and toolkit are due to the limitations of the authors in translating this experience into useful guidelines. Therefore, it will be continually revised and updated to reflect improving the understanding and practice of partnership in WaterAid.

**Louisa Gosling, Programme Support Unit**  
WaterAid January 2021

► (L-R) Tripti Rai (Country Director, WaterAid Nepal), Bhupendra Prasad (General Manager, Nepal Water Supply Corporation) and Muni Sah (Mayor of Lahan Municipality) after signing the declaration of intent at Lahan Municipality Office, Lahan, Siraha, Nepal. September, 2018.



# Glossary and definitions

**Partner:** In its broadest sense, we use the term 'partner' to refer to any organisation we collaborate with to help reach our objectives.

We have different working relationships that we classify into four broad types:

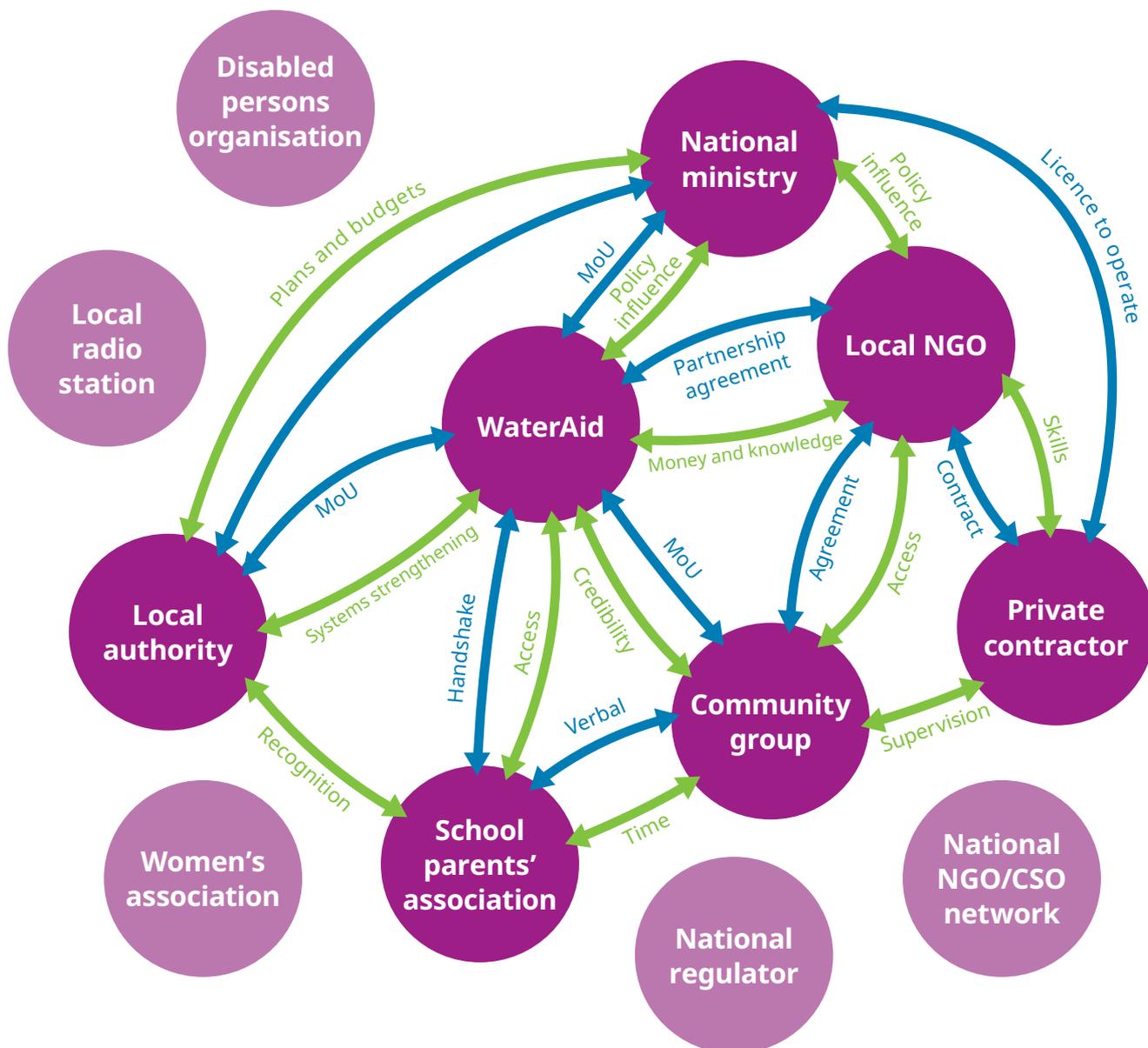
- **Formal partnerships** are based on signed and legally binding Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) that set out agreed objectives, roles, responsibilities, processes and deliverables of all parties. These include objectives for the programme that the partnership is aiming to deliver and for the partnership itself. Organisational development is often included in the partnership goals. A partnership should contribute to mutual learning and mutual accountability.
- **Collaborative partnerships** involve working with other organisations towards shared long-term aims, for example through knowledge sharing or advocacy. They do not usually involve a legally binding agreement or significant transfer of funds. Partners may develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to express the shared intention of the collaboration and each party's roles, responsibilities and contributions.
- **A consortium** is a group of organisations set up to pursue a common aim. A funded consortium set up to achieve specific objectives is bound by a formal agreement with defined roles and responsibilities. In this type, one organisation, known as the prime, is responsible for managing the grant and distributing funds to the other partners.
- **Contracts with service or goods providers** are not usually considered partnerships. The contract sets out the goods or services they will provide, the terms and conditions and the payment to be made. The supplier delivers the services or goods according to the buyer's specifications.

Other terms used in relation to partnership:

- **Partners vs partnership:** A focus on partners means a focus on the organisations that we work with. A focus on partnership means a focus on the relationships between different organisations and how well the collaboration as a whole is working.
- **Strategic partnership vs tactical partnership:** Strategic collaboration focuses on working towards common interests and long-term goals with another organisation over a long period. Tactical collaboration focuses on achieving specific outcomes through partnership.
- **Transformational relationships vs transactional relationships:** Transformational relationships aim to empower and build the capacity and profile of the organisations involved, while transactional relationships are more like contracts to deliver specific services without any focus on developing capacity or sustainability of the partner organisation.

## An example of complex partnerships involved in a programme at sub-national level

All programmes involve many stakeholders, who are connected through a range of formal and informal agreements, with resources flowing between them. These include tangible resources such as money, and intangible resources such as knowledge, contacts and skills. This diagram illustrates just one possible example. Every programme looks different.



↔ Agreement

↔ Resource flow

● Partners involved in this project

● Examples of potential partners not involved in this particular project

MoU = Memorandum of Understanding

CSO = Civil Society Organisation

**Partnership agreements:** Different types of agreement reflect the relationships between the different stakeholders.

| Stakeholder term   | Definition   |
|--|--|
| <b>Stakeholder</b>   | A stakeholder is any actor (individual, group or organisation) participating in a project and/or with an interest in, influence on, or impacted by a project and its outcomes. The interest, influence or impact can be positive or negative, direct or indirect.  |
| <b>Target Group</b>  | Stakeholders that we 'target' during the project through activities (e.g. district authorities), in order to reach and benefit WASH users.   |
| <b>WASH users (sometimes referred to as 'ultimate' or 'final beneficiaries')</b> | Stakeholders that the project seeks to have a positive impact on (e.g. health centre patients, people in communities, school students). As rights holders they are key stakeholders in most projects. We do not normally sign formal partnership agreements with them, but we should discuss and agree our roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to each other.   |
| <b>Project Partner</b>   | An organisation with whom we are delivering a specific, time-bound project, that is funded. A Project Partner is typically named within a restricted funding proposal and should pass relevant due diligence and ethical checks before PPAs are signed. A Project Partner can simultaneously be a collaborative partner (5), but usually cannot be a service/goods provider (6) within the same project.   |
| <b>Collaborative Partner</b>   | An organisation (for example a government agency, NGO or academic institution) we are committed to working with over a longer period to achieve broad, shared objectives without a transfer of funds, often formalised through an MoU. A collaborative partner can also be a Project Partner when working together on a funded, timebound project.   |
| <b>Service/Goods Provider</b>  | An individual or organisation who is contracted and funded to deliver specific goods or services within a defined (usually short term) period, bound by a contract. A Service/Goods Provider usually cannot be a Project Partner within the same project they are providing services or goods for.   |
| <b>Consortium Prime or Key Supplier</b>  | A Consortium Prime or Key Supplier builds and leads a consortium of organisations to bid for and deliver specific timebound projects. Other partners in the consortium (including WaterAid) are typically referred to as a 'Sub-Contractor' or 'Sub'. Key Suppliers include private sector organisations, NGOs, and research organisations. WaterAid as a Sub-Contractor will sign a formal agreement with the Key Supplier. Terms and conditions from this agreement will usually need to flow to Project Partners. |
| <b>Consortium Partner</b>  | An organisation with whom WaterAid is working alongside within a consortium led by a Key Supplier. WaterAid and other Consortium Partners should collaborate in line with agreed partnership principles and the ways of working in the consortium.   |

# Introduction

At WaterAid, we have always believed that working through partnerships is fundamental to achieving change at a greater scale and with greater sustainability. We will only achieve our vision and mission through collaborating with a wide range of partners from government, civil society, academia and the private sector to improve policy and practice relating to WASH. Our role is to be a catalyst and agent of change, ultimately enabling national institutions to make and sustain long-term improvements in access to WASH.

The focus of partnerships goes beyond short-term project deliverables. We aim to strengthen the institutions, systems and capacities that are needed to deliver sustainable WASH services in the long term. To achieve this, we need to develop enabling and empowering relationships that support our partners to strengthen their capacity to deliver sustainable WASH as articulated in [WaterAid's Partnership framework](#).

Four values guide our practical approach to working collaboratively with others:

- **Complementarity or synergy in working towards a shared vision:** Recognising the contribution and added value each partner brings.
- **Mutual respect and support:** Recognising that each partner has the right to determine its own organisational direction and priorities.
- **Accountability:** Being answerable to each other as partners, and to wider stakeholders including communities, governments and donors.
- **Equity:** Ensuring decision-making processes are as fair as possible, within the reality that unequal power relations exist, and striving to increase less powerful partners' capacities to engage.

Most partnerships in the WASH sector involve several stakeholders. To be effective, we have to understand what our most important contribution to each partnership is and maximise its value. Each partnership is unique, affected by both the specific context of WASH in a country or district and the internal factors that affect individual organisations.

External and internal factors change continuously, so we must treat all partnerships as dynamic and evolving. We must continuously assess and review our role in each partnership, taking into account feedback from partners, so that we remain effective and relevant.

Many WaterAid staff in different positions interact with partners, and each plays a critical role in maintaining this empowering relationship, whilst ensuring projects are delivered successfully.

This toolkit provides practical guidance on good partnership practice that should be relevant for all staff. The guidance, tools and checklists should be adapted, developed and implemented in close collaboration between colleagues responsible for programme work, advocacy, finance and fundraising.

This toolkit provides a short guide on each of the areas below, with links to relevant tools:

|   |  |    |   |
|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | Assessing and selecting partners<br>Page 10  | 6  | Conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms<br>Page 28 |
| 2 | Planning with partners: Drafting partnership agreements, objectives and budgets<br>Page 16 | 7  | Exit or transition strategy<br>Page 30                  |
| 3 | Partnership behaviours: Monitoring and support<br>18                                       | 8  | Communication plans<br>Page 32                          |
| 4 | Governance and accountability: Decision-making in partnerships<br>Page 21                  | 9  | Measuring success in partnerships<br>Page 34            |
| 5 | Capacity strengthening<br>Page 24  | 10 | Working with different types of organisation<br>Page 36 |

These additional guidelines, tools and templates provide further detail:

- **WaterAid Partnership framework:** Overarching position, approach and principles.
- **Guidelines on Finance Partnerships:** Provide more detail for finance staff on how to manage risk in partnerships without being overly controlling, in a way that is relevant to the different levels of risk associated with different partners and types of partnerships.
- **Guidelines and templates for agreements:** Set out the contents of Memorandums of Understanding and Project Partnership Agreements.
- **Partnership practice tools:** How to carry out specific exercises in this toolkit.
- **Key supplier strategy:** Where WaterAid is a downstream partner to a prime and will be guided by the restricted funding process.

# 1

## Assessing and selecting partners

- Develop a partnership strategy for your programme to help achieve your strategic goals. Set out which type partnerships will suit specific organisations. Include analysis of stakeholders and potential partners – identifying which organisations to work with and the types of partnership that would be most productive. Recognise which inputs and resources WaterAid needs to invest in the relationships.
- Establish a clear and transparent process for the selection and assessment of new partners. Make sure partners can also assess WaterAid.
- Invest in time to get to know each other. This also applies when you are selected by other organisations, for example in a consortium.

The selection of partners should be based on an analysis of WASH sector blockages and opportunities. Selecting the **right partners** is critical to the success of WaterAid and its ability to achieve all of its strategic aims.

Each country or regional strategy will require a **mix of different types of relationship** with multiple types of organisations in order to achieve their short-term objectives, as well as the longer-term aim to strengthen WASH systems and empower people to claim their rights. As duty bearers for WASH services, the **local and national government agencies** will almost always be involved.

The success of every project or programme depends on contributions from a range of organisations and there will be different types of relationships between all the stakeholders involved, some of which are formal and some of which are informal. The **partnership mapping exercise** can be used to analyse which organisations should be involved, the expertise each organisation can contribute, and the most appropriate type of agreement to get the best value from each relationship. This includes relationships that involve a transfer of funds, and those that do not.

It is important to select partners that have a **shared vision and shared objectives** for the work that is undertaken, and to select partners that bring different areas of expertise to help achieve the objectives. Each organisation will also have different incentives for being involved in a relationship and it is always useful to analyse these at the beginning of the partnership.

We have a responsibility to use donor funds **effectively** – that means selecting partners who can be effective and are able to comply with donor and WaterAid requirements. This will include organisations that already have a high capacity to deliver programmes. It might also include some that have potential to be effective but need support to develop their technical and programme management capacity, as well as their institutional capacity for governance, safeguarding, human resource and financial management (see Section 3 on capacity development).

The suitability of potential partners should be established through **conducting a thorough assessment** and due diligence to assess their technical skills, governance and controls, effective safeguarding and financial sustainability, as well as their approach to human rights and equality. Gathering a wide range of perspectives from others, including Civil Society Organisations, WASH users, other donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and government, as part of the assessment process will ensure an informed decision is made.

Partner selection should be based on a **set of agreed criteria** developed by each CP and applied by WaterAid through a transparent process (see **sample checklist**).

Potential partners should also have an opportunity to understand WaterAid and assess if they wish to partner with us. It is important to approach the selection process as a mutual assessment of each other and discuss the potential benefits and risks of the partnership.

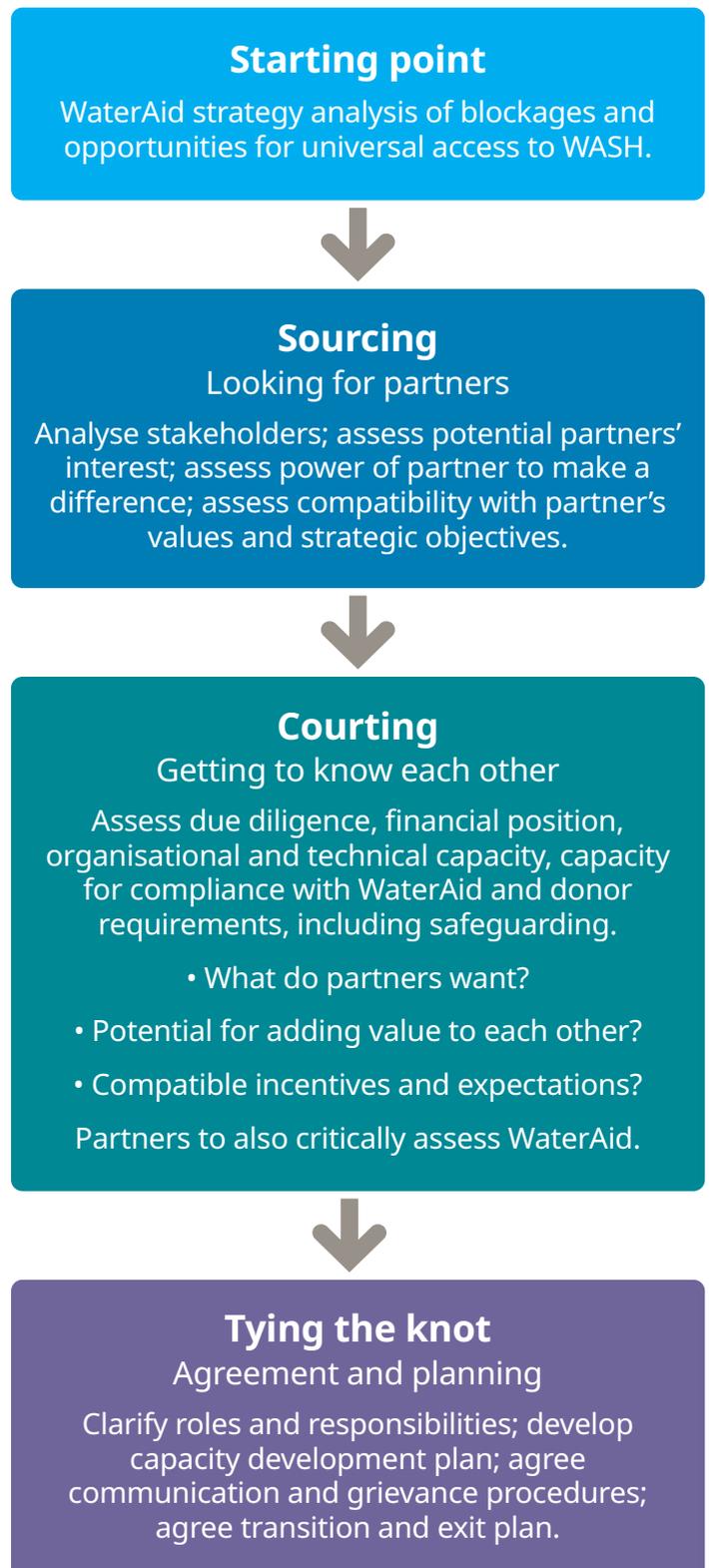
It may not always be possible to find an organisation that already has all the necessary capacities and attributes to achieve specific objectives. In that case, the CP should consider whether to invest in developing the capacity of an organisation that has the necessary desire and potential to fulfil the roles required.

## The partner selection process

Representatives from different functions across WaterAid should be involved in the partner selection process. Senior staff must also be involved in the making of these decisions. The last phase of the process is to agree and sign partnership agreements or MoUs.

**Guidance for the drafting of agreements** is available on WASH Matters.

The diagram below captures the flow of the selection process; starting from the sourcing of partners (**sourcing**), getting to know each other through assessment and checks (**courting**), through to agreements and planning (**tying the knot**).



## Risks within partner selection

Careful selection and assessment procedures can mitigate against the risks of finding out that the partners' strategies or incentives are not compatible with WaterAid's. A risk-based approach to partner selection will also help expose any hidden agendas, or potential issues with capacity for partners to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The following table sets out some **suggested processes and tools of partner selection**, and who should be involved. These should be adapted for the context of the project.

|   | Process  | Tools  | Who should be involved?  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Sourcing: Looking for partner</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> <li>• Organisations working in same area/theme</li> <li>• Staged interactions (informal, formal, short- to long-term, field visits)</li> <li>• Competitive/open tendering processes</li> <li>• Direct invitations</li> <li>• Advertise</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoping studies</li> <li>• Stakeholder or power mapping analysis</li> <li>• NGO/Government databases</li> <li>• Selection checklist</li> <li>• Monitoring framework</li> <li>• SWOT analysis</li> <li>• Recommendation reports</li> <li>• Partnership strategy/guidelines</li> <li>• Calls for expression of interest</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country Director/Senior Management Team (SMT)</li> <li>• Operational staff</li> <li>• Regional managers</li> <li>• Inter-departmental committee</li> <li>• Partner heads and staff</li> <li>• Referees</li> <li>• CBOs</li> <li>• Community (Depends on context)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Courting: Getting to know each other</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know each other – informally and formally (vision, mission, values, styles, cultures)</li> <li>• Setting a culture of mutuality, transparency and accountability</li> <li>• Planning for mechanisms and norms</li> <li>• Seeing each other's work</li> <li>• Capacity needs assessments</li> <li>• Skill mapping of WaterAid and partners</li> <li>• Understand expectations of each other in managing the relationship</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives mapping</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities mapping exercise</li> <li>• <b>Checklists</b></li> <li>• Capacity needs assessment for technical and organisational capacity</li> <li>• Safeguarding self-assessment</li> <li>• Ethical checks</li> <li>• Risk assessments</li> <li>• Expression of interest review process</li> <li>• WaterAid partnership guidelines</li> <li>• Induction discussions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CD/SMT/head of potential partner organisations</li> <li>• Relevant departments</li> <li>• Other data sources: community; newspapers; websites; WASH networks; other NGOs</li> <li>• Finance/audit/legal firms</li> <li>• Safeguarding focal point</li> </ul>                |
| <b>Tying the knot: Completing the agreement</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify objectives, roles and responsibilities, intended results, length of relationship</li> <li>• Clarify resources needed to carry out the work</li> <li>• Develop capacity plan for partner and WaterAid to fulfill expectations</li> <li>• Negotiate paperwork</li> <li>• Plan for regular communication and review</li> <li>• Focus on joint purpose and win-win spirit throughout</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities map exercise</li> <li>• Action plans</li> <li>• Paperwork templates (adding in areas identified by partner)</li> <li>• Grievance/exit strategies</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMT/Country Director/partners' directors</li> <li>• WaterAid and partner staff</li> <li>• Relevant departments</li> <li>• Other WASH sector actors (Depends on context)</li> </ul>  |

## Selection criteria

It is important to assess partners according to key criteria to ensure there will be a minimum standard of administration, management and delivery within which both parties operate. There also needs to be a clear understanding of capacity and resource needs. This checklist draws on tools developed by CPs. Sometimes it may be difficult to find partnerships that meet all the criteria and this has to be acknowledged and addressed in capacity development plans.

Each country should adapt this checklist to its own context, and some criteria may not apply to all partners. We would also expect partners to assess WaterAid against similar criteria to ensure that we will be able to fulfil our responsibilities in the partnership.

## Partner selection checklist

| No | Criteria to be met  | Criteria met |    |
|----|---|--------------|----|
|    |   | Yes          | No |
| 1  | <b>Governance/organisational and legal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation between management and trustees</li> <li>• Trustee manual developed</li> <li>• Board independence</li> <li>• Board of trustees/directors in operation</li> <li>• Statutory compliance</li> <li>• Legal existence</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Business plan</li> <li>• Going concern</li> <li>• Structure in place for organisational development.</li> <li>• Arrangement in place for personal development of staff.</li> <li>• Political neutrality</li> <li>• Declaration of conflicts of interest to enable the assessment of working relationships between parties.</li> <li>• Notoriety</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Evidence of commitment to the cause and engagement with the sector and assurance of dedication.</li> <li>• Ability to fundraise</li> </ul> |              |    |
| 2  | <b>Technical ability (for delivery of programmes of work)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior experience</li> <li>• Track record</li> <li>• Management and staff skills</li> <li>• Adequate resources to enable delivery</li> <li>• Geographical location and the practicality of working arrangements.</li> </ul>   |              |    |

| No | Criteria to be met  | Criteria met |    |
|----|---|--------------|----|
|    |   | Yes          | No |
| 3  | <p><b>Programme and management controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to conduct effective planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER). Arrangements in place to ensure monitoring and reporting, for example, counting users, Water Quality (WQ) testing, sustainability and the application of equity and inclusion principles.</li> <li>• Healthy community relationships</li> <li>• Ability to capture learning</li> <li>• Ability to adapt, be flexible and work well as a team</li> <li>• Documentation</li> <li>• Linkages established with other stakeholders</li> <li>• Strategies for scaling and mainstreaming</li> </ul> |              |    |
| 4  | <p><b>Financial management and control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems in place to support the production of good quality financial reports</li> <li>• External audits performed</li> <li>• Procedures in place for efficient cash management</li> <li>• Effective banking controls</li> <li>• Documented chart of accounts in use</li> <li>• Processes in place for budgeting and budget management</li> </ul>  |              |    |
| 5  | <p><b>Capacity to meet additional donor compliance requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional programme frameworks or policies of donors</li> <li>• Additional donor requirements for financial management and control, such as knowledge of cost eligibility, timesheets, procurement procedures and supporting documentation.</li> <li>• Timely and quality reporting</li> <li>• Other donor-specific compliance requirements</li> </ul>  |              |    |
| 6  | <p><b>Ethical checks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical values consistent with WaterAid's</li> <li>• Previous reputation</li> <li>• Indictments (staff and trustees)</li> <li>• Work ethics – child rights, human rights, equality</li> <li>• Terrorism checks; internal audit to be informed</li> </ul>  |              |    |
| 7  | <p><b>Safeguarding capacity check</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of safeguarding self-assessment tool and action plan</li> </ul>   |              |    |

### Additional checks to support the partner selection process:

| No | Check  | Detail |
|----|--|--------|
| 1  | Value addition, specific strength of partner that can add value to WaterAid and other partners for sector strengthening. |        |
| 2  | New/old partner balance; fit with current portfolio and ability to manage increase; state resources.                     |        |
| 3  | Approval process; formally approving new partnerships.   |        |
| 4  | Capacity building plan; developed from mutual assessment of capacity needs identified in partner and WaterAid.           |        |
| 5  | Documentation of selection process; formal reports to be filed after each process.                                       |        |

### Additional resources for assessing and selecting partner:

| Tool  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Partnerships in practice tools: Partner selection processes and exit strategies</b>      | An exercise to develop a comprehensive process for the selection and assessment of new partners in a CP.  |
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>   | Section 2 and Appendix 1 provide detailed guidance and a checklist on risk-based partnership assessments from a finance perspective.  |
| <b>Capacity needs assessment tool (BPD and Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) 2012)</b> | A tool for systematically assessing the capacity needs of all partners using the categories; aspirations, strategy, skills, human resources, systems and infrastructures, structure and culture.  |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tools: Mapping your partnerships</b>                            | Use this tool to analyse the types of relationships that will be needed between different organisations for any programme. It can help identify where new partners or different types of partnership are needed.                        |
| <b>Safeguarding self-assessment tool</b>  | Use this tool to assess a partner's safeguarding capacity, which will yield an overall score. This should be done as a joint exercise between the partner and CP and will feed back into the capacity needs assessment and action plan. |



## Planning with partners: Drawing up partnership agreements, setting objectives and budgeting

- Draw up all **agreements** with partners in accordance with WaterAid guidelines, with full participation of partners and paying particular attention to all the mandatory fields. Ensure roles and responsibilities of different partners are well articulated and mutually understood.
- If you must use another partner's or donor's agreement template, make sure WaterAid's mandatory fields are covered. WaterAid has specific tools for projects funded by USAID.
- Use a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to set out the long-term vision and aims for the partnership, the values that each partner brings and to clearly set out the roles and responsibilities. The MoU includes general commitments in regard to WaterAid policies but is not legally enforceable. Use an MoU for partnerships that do not involve any transfer of funds.
- Use **Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs)** to establish clear expectations, and roles and responsibilities for specific funded projects delivered together. Include legally enforceable requirements for compliance and make clear the accountabilities of each partner. Where WaterAid is working with the same partner on different projects, there may be several PPAs under the same MoU.
- Wherever possible and where funding permits, move towards **multi-year PPAs** in CPs to provide stability and a more strategic approach.

Effective partnerships depend on a shared understanding of what the partnership is aiming to achieve, and the roles and responsibilities of each partner. This includes:

- **Objectives and expectations related to specific projects as set out in the PPA.** **Longer-term aims of the partnership** itself, including any objectives for capacity building or organisational development. Where a collaboration is not limited to a specific project these long-term aims should be included in an MoU.

The process for arriving at these agreements should be done in a way that embodies the partnership principles of **complementarity, mutual respect, accountability and equity.**

When negotiating the partnership objectives and different roles and responsibilities, it is important that these should **align with the incentives and expectations** of each organisation as far as possible. The exercise on assessing partnership incentives can be used to encourage an open discussion about this. The PPA also sets out conditions whereby an agreement should be **terminated**, and an **exit strategy** (see Section 7) to acknowledge that all partnerships will end at some stage under certain conditions. A probationary period may be included in the agreement for some new partnerships.

**Multi-year PPAs** are preferable to provide more continuity, efficiency and effectiveness. Single-year agreements, that need to be renewed each year, can slow the delivery of work, cause uncertainty for the partner about financing, and create extra admin for everyone.

MoUs and multi-year agreements should be based on a **capacity needs assessment** of WaterAid and each partner at the initial planning stage to identify how the partnership can help strengthen areas of weakness and draw on the strengths of the different organisations to contribute to the overall aims of the collaborative work. It is good practice to include a funded capacity development plan as an annex for every PPA.

Partners should also collaborate closely on programme planning to agree specific objectives, activities and budgets, and make sure these are realistic and relevant for all partners. These include project plans and budgets that are agreed each year, and should clearly set out the different roles and responsibilities. Collaborative planning is often carried out at partner round table meetings.

### Additional resources for planning with partners:

| Tool  | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>Guidelines to WaterAid Partnership Agreement and Templates (2020)</b>  | Detailed guidance for developing MoUs and PPAs that are fit for purpose, support mutual accountability and can be understood by all concerned.   |
| <b>Capacity needs assessment tool (BPD and GTF 2012)</b>  | A tool for systematically assessing the capacity needs of partners using the categories; aspirations, strategy, skills, human resources, systems and infrastructures, structure and culture.                         |
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>   | Specific guidance relevant to finance staff. Includes more detail on finance conditions in partnership agreements.   |
| <b>The Partnership Paperchase: Structuring Partnership Agreements in Water and Sanitation in Low-Income Communities</b> | This gives a good overview of the agreement process and when to introduce 'paperwork' including both informal (letters and nonbinding MoUs etc.), as well as more formal documents.                                  |
| <b>Safeguarding self-assessment tool and partner code of conduct</b>  | A safeguarding self-assessment tool to be included as part of the agreement process. An action plan should be completed based upon the outcome of the assessment and this built into capacity building and training. |

► WaterAid Timor-Leste signed agreements with four local partners to help support the COVID-19 response, particularly in the community of Manufahi and Liquiça, Timor-Leste. July, 2020.





## Partnership behaviours: Monitoring and support

- Establish a culture of shared accountability to achieve long-term aims, specific project objectives and mutual accountability in communities.
- Allow time and communication for equitable feedback, complaints, health checks and reviews. Discuss exit strategies from the beginning and review them regularly. Fully respect and recognise contributions from all partners, including tangible resources, as well as less tangible contributions, such as experience, contacts, skills and networks.
- Make sure WaterAid's external communications fully represent the role of partners, and logos of all participating organisations are included on outputs of the partnership, including infrastructure and documentation.
- Develop partnership skills in WaterAid staff and partners.

Partnerships are relationships that change and develop over time. Over its life cycle, a partnership goes through different stages as organisations and individuals change, and the relationship itself becomes more mature. This requires us to be flexible in how we manage partnerships.

WaterAid needs to invest time and resources, and **develop the skills of its staff to monitor and support** successful partnerships, build on strengths, address difficulties, resolve conflicts and manage change – including the end of the partnership.

There can often be a **power imbalance** in partnership relationships, especially if one organisation is much bigger than another, or one provides the funding. This makes it more important to provide space for all partners to express their perspective, regardless of their power within the partnership. Monitoring processes should hold WaterAid and partners **mutually accountable** for fulfilling their different responsibilities (see Section 4 on governance and accountability).

Ongoing two-way communication between all partners is important, and periodic **health checks** are a good way to ensure the partnership principles of **complementarity, mutual respect, accountability and equity** are all being respected. Agreed milestones for partnership reviews should be embedded in the programme plans.

A **partnership health check** can be a short exercise that provides an opportunity for WaterAid and partners to present their different perspectives of a partnership and agree how to work together more effectively. This includes assessment of how well WaterAid is performing as a reliable partner (see this tool and **the checklist** for suggested discussion points). You can use the exercises to periodically map out partnerships, review expectations and incentives, and revisit roles and responsibilities as these continue to develop and change over time. Make sure all participants agree on any adjustments made to the partnership as a result of the review.



WaterAid/Sibtain Haider

▲ Tim Wainwright, along with the WaterAid Pakistan team, meeting with Malik Amin Aslam, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, and Hassan Nasir Jamy, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change, to discuss the current partnership between the ministry and WaterAid on Clean Green Pakistan, at Ministry of Climate Change, Islamabad, Pakistan. November, 2019.

It may sometimes be useful to carry out an externally facilitated **in-depth evaluation of partnerships**, where all parties have an opportunity to analyse strengths and weaknesses in a relationship, what lessons can be learnt, and what should be done differently in the future. This can also be included as part of a project evaluation.

**Reviews of partners'** capacity and performance may also be carried out where needed to identify specific requirements for **capacity development** on key areas such as programme quality, finance or safeguarding. This is dealt with in more depth in the next section.

All partnerships come to an end, and the process of **phasing out** or **ending partnerships** should be managed carefully. An exit or transition strategy should be planned from the beginning of every single project and managed to ensure that the benefits of the partnership, as well as the project, are sustained. This is particularly important where partners have become very dependent on WaterAid funding (see Section 7).

## Partnership health check

### Suggested discussion points:



**Review of roles** and responsibilities – are these working in practice? Do they need to be changed?



**Are partners and WaterAid participating as expected?** Are there any obstacles to partners' participation? Are they delivering on their commitments? Do the partner representatives have support from their organisation?



**Are there any gaps in roles or resources?** Can these be filled by existing partners? Do they need support for capacity development or is there a need to bring in new partners?



**Are the governance structures functioning effectively?** Do they need streamlining or strengthening? Are clear systems in place to address grievances? Are there clear rules for decision-making?



**Has the context changed?** Has this affected partners' capacity or incentives to be involved?



Does the **partnership agreement** need to be changed (including objectives and targets etc.)?



Does the partnership need to amend its **exit or transition strategy**?

## Additional resources for monitoring and supporting partnerships:

| Tool   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>                        | Section 5 of this guide provides principles, guidelines and tools for finance staff in relation to monitoring and support of partners.   |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Partnership health check</b>   | This tool gives more detail about how to carry out the health check exercise.  |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Assessing incentives</b>       | This exercise helps identify the incentives of different partners to collaborate with WaterAid. The tool can be used as part of a health check to support a discussion about different interests and how the partnership can best meet expectations. |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Roles and responsibilities</b> | This exercise can be used as part of a health check. It highlights the roles and responsibilities in the partnership, along with any gaps/ unfulfilled roles and current capacity needs.   |
| <b>Partnership in practice tool: Partnership governance</b>      | This exercise focuses on exploring governance and accountability processes within partnerships and to external stakeholders.   |

► Nyamagabe District government officials standing with WaterAid staff and Shirley Campbell from Scottish Water after a meeting, Nyamagabe District, Rwanda, February, 2019.



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

# 4

## Governance and accountability: Decision-making in partnerships

- Put clear governance structures and processes in place to ensure transparency, responsiveness and compliance for all members of the partnership. Make sure all parties clearly understand the implications of non-compliance with the partnership agreement.
- The governance structures will be specific to the type of partnership, the context and the funding arrangements (if any).
- Regularly undertake partner surveys to get feedback from partners about WaterAid's effectiveness in adding value to other organisations.

**Governance** refers to the development of responsibility and decision-making structures in a partnership, and how decisions are made. **Accountability** refers to the way in which individuals and organisations are held responsible for carrying out those decisions. Clarity in both is important for effective partnerships and for effective programmes. Together, they provide a firm foundation for **trust** between partners.

**Good governance** is needed to promote and maintain engagement internally, while demonstrating legitimacy and credibility **externally**.

A good governance system should ensure all partners do what they have agreed to do, while allowing diversity, innovation and flexibility.

An appropriate governance system should be based on the following considerations:

- **Decision-making arrangements** – What is the forum where decisions will be taken? Who leads the process? Are the structures appropriate for the type of partnership and sufficiently robust for the nature of decisions to be taken and the level of risk? Are all partners comfortable with the level of formality?
- **Decision-making within the partnership** – What is the basis for decision-making? Is there agreement about the kinds of issues that need to be brought to all for a decision?
- **Individual partner decision-making processes** – How do the partners make decisions within their own institution? Are some fast decision makers while others are slower and more deliberate? How hierarchical or consultative are the different partners? How can you manage decision-making between partners to accommodate these differences?
- **Ensuring compliance for high risk areas such as safeguarding** – Who is responsible for safeguarding and child protection? Is the board informed of safeguarding concerns/ issues? Are clear reporting procedures in place and accessible for staff and communities? Are safeguarding concerns acted upon appropriately?
- **Financial arrangements** – Who is responsible for finances and accounting? Is the partnership audited, and if so, how? How is financial information communicated internally and externally?

- **Information management** – What reporting mechanisms are in place? How is information about the partnership communicated internally and externally? Who takes responsibility for information management?
- **Communication within and between partners** – Are there clear protocols for communicating essential information, including frequency, methods and channels? How will you make sure all relevant knowledge is shared between all partners?
- **Conflict resolution** – Are there clear procedures for managing conflicts? Who manages conflict resolution processes? Do partners understand conflict resolution procedures?

Governance structures can vary, for example decisions can be made through steering committees, or by delegating authority to one partner. There could be rotating chairs and scribes, majority decision-making or consensus decision-making. Sometimes there is risk weighting where different partners carry different weights of decision-making authority based around negotiations of real and perceived risk.

Governance systems only work when individuals and organisations are held accountable to fulfil their responsibilities. A culture of accountability ensures that individuals feel personally responsible for fulfilling their own responsibilities and are able to challenge others to fulfil theirs.

Accountability has four main components:

- **Transparency** – provide information to stakeholders;
- **Responsiveness** – encourage feedback and respond to stakeholder concerns;
- **Compliance** – comply with standards and rules, including legal requirements;
- **Participation** – of stakeholders in decision-making.

**Mutual accountability** is key to successful partnerships. This means partners are accountable to WaterAid, and WaterAid is accountable to its partners – both are accountable to donors and, most importantly, to communities for delivering effective work and ensuring access to safe water and sanitation for all.

Accountability systems should help WaterAid achieve its aims and objectives, and they should also help partners to achieve theirs. In addition, several WaterAid partnerships and alliances are expressly set up to promote accountability in the sector: supporting WASH users to hold providers to account and supporting providers to be responsive.

Where WaterAid is providing funding, the accountability structures need to manage risks associated with money. Where WaterAid is funded by a donor or part of a consortium, it will have to fulfil accountability requirements for other organisations. These accountabilities need to be reflected in partner agreements and managing these risks is an important part of monitoring and support of partnerships (see previous section).

#### **Typical accountability mechanisms include:**

- Financial monitoring and reporting
- Safeguarding reporting
- Internal and external audits
- Project and programme monitoring and evaluation
- Performance management based on personal and programme objectives
- Feedback surveys and complaint mechanisms
- Beneficiary feedback

Accountability processes can be very one sided and disempowering for partners with less power and resources than others. Good partnership practice can help to re-balance these power relationships through jointly developing governance and accountability mechanisms. For example, by involving partners and communities systematically in planning and monitoring, providing clear processes for feedback, empowering partners to assess WaterAid's capacity and performance as a partner or funder, and by ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives of less powerful stakeholders are properly recognised in all agreements.

## Additional resources for governance and accountability:

| Tool  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Partnership in practice tools: Partnership governance</b>  | This exercise focuses on exploring governance and accountability processes within partnerships and to external stakeholders.  |
| <b>Restricted funding hub</b>   | This hub provides a one-stop shop for tools and resources to support your restricted funding activities. Use this to make sure your governance and accountability processes are aligned with donor compliance.  |
| <b>Planning, monitoring evaluation and reporting hub</b>  | Details of WaterAid core procedures and resources for project management. Responsibilities to be discussed with partners.   |
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>   | Section 4 of this guide sets out principles and guidelines for governance and accountability from a finance perspective.  |
| <b>A feminist approach to partnerships</b>  | Blog by consultant on women's rights on how to manage and govern partnerships from a feminist perspective.  |
| <b>The Partnership Paperchase: Structuring Partnership Agreements in Water and Sanitation in Low-Income Communities</b> | This paper explains the role of paperwork in partnership governance, including both informal (letters and nonbinding MoUs etc.), as well as more formal documents (contracts, corporation articles and bylaws) that describe how partners come together, how they interact, what they do and how their partnership is expected to evolve over time. |



◀ Members of the community who work in the Kolagaon Community Clinic, Sunamganj Tahirpur, Bangladesh. October, 2019.

WaterAid/Tapas Paul

# S

## Capacity strengthening

- **Develop plans for learning and capacity strengthening** activities with partner organisations and WaterAid, based on a strategic view of how the organisations (including WaterAid) wish to develop in-line with the partnership objectives and goals.
- Design capacity development to address specific gaps identified through participatory **capacity needs assessments**, with supporting activities to embed the learning in the organisation.

▼ **Dr. Queen Kulwa Machella, 24, clinical officer, in her office at Nkome Dispensary, Geita District, Tanzania. WaterAid Tanzania, in partnership with Amref Health Africa, received funding from the Government of Canada to help strengthen maternal new-born and child health in developing countries. June, 2019.**



### Capacity development interacts with partnerships in several ways:

- **Capacity development as an input to effective partnership.** A risk assessment is often carried out at the beginning of a partnership to assess each partner's capacity (including an assessment of WaterAid's capacity) to fulfil their respective roles in the partnership arrangement. If gaps are identified, then a capacity development plan may be formulated and implemented to enable each organisation (including WaterAid) to successfully carry out its role.
- **Capacity development as an outcome of effective partnership.** Capacity development is often an outcome of a successful partnership. Each partner brings different, and often complementary, capacities to contribute towards the shared goals. By working together, the partners learn from each other, increasing each other's capacity, and contributing to the strengthening of local and national WASH systems.

### Steps in capacity risk assessment and development

1. The first step is to engage with all of the partners in the process, agree on the goal of the partnership, and commit to developing capacities for each organisation to effectively fulfill their role in the partnership.

Each context and project is unique and the respective roles of each stakeholder and the relationships between them are also unique and need to be clarified at the start

of any partnership. This can be done through **a participatory analysis of roles and responsibilities**. Once the role is clarified, the desired capacity of each stakeholder to effectively perform its role can be determined. A participatory assessment of capacity assets and needs of all partners and of WaterAid will then commence.

2. Next, formulate a capacity development plan based on the outcome of the participatory assessment. Capacity development activities can include training, mentoring, knowledge sharing, attending conferences, exchange visits and secondments. There are many external institutions that can provide relevant training on different topics. WaterAid has also developed its own set of e-learning materials and a range of face to face training activities to support capacity development with partners on several topics including:

- Technical aspects of WASH delivery – including water quality testing, rural sanitation, WASH in healthcare facilities and borehole supervision.
- National monitoring.
- Designing and implementing a hygiene behaviour change programme.
- Equality, inclusion and human rights.
- Menstrual hygiene management (MHM).
- Financial management and grant management.
- Fundraising and proposal writing.
- Organisational management, human resource management and performance management.
- Procurement and inventory management.
- Project design, monitoring and evaluation, report writing, case study and data management.
- Research, documentation and communication.
- Partnership practice.



When formulating a tailored capacity development plan, it is important to understand the relationship between developing capacities at three levels: **individual, organisational and environmental**, in order to bring about transformational change.

**Individual capacities** include knowledge and skills of an organisation’s staff in various domains, such as WASH technical, accounting, people management and project coordination.

**Organisational capacities** include things like structures, processes, relationships, resources and infrastructure that allow an organisation to perform its role.

**Environmental capacities** refer to factors beyond the direct control of an organisation, such as national WASH policies (unless you are the policy maker), national poverty rate, availability of global funds (unless you are the funder), and climate change, which can significantly enable or inhibit an organisation to perform its role in the WASH system.

A common mistake in formulating a capacity development plan is to only target individual capacities (e.g. technical training workshops for staff), while ignoring the role of organisational and environmental capacities. Improving organisational capacities and advocating for changes in environmental capacities can sometimes be more powerful in enabling a partner organisation to effectively fulfil its role in the partnership.

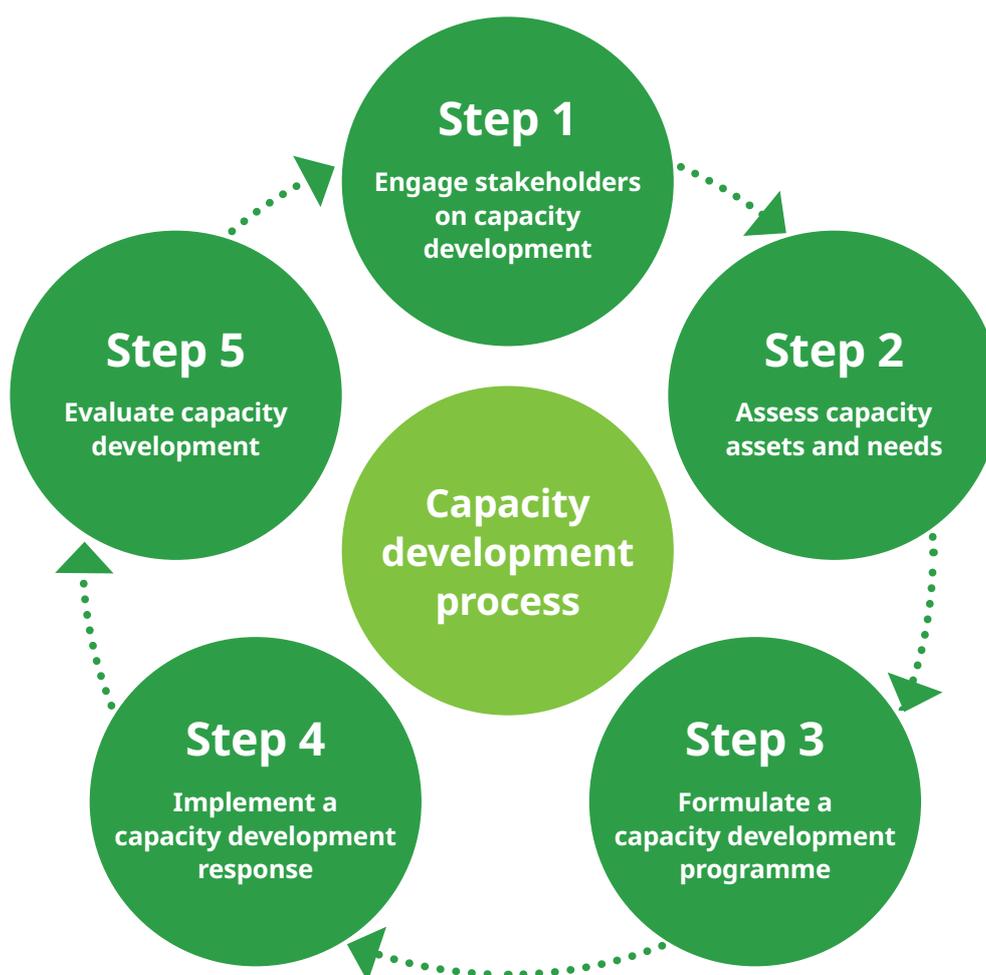
Another common mistake is to assume it is WaterAid's role to build the capacity of partners. Many partners have greater knowledge and capacity than WaterAid in certain aspects of the work, in which case they will build WaterAid's capacity or can develop the capacity of other partners. In some cases, WaterAid's role may be to facilitate capacity development between different partners, or between partners and external parties. Once the capacity development plan is agreed, then it can be put into action. Progress should be regularly monitored by WaterAid and the partner to assess what is working and what needs improvement – the plan should then be updated accordingly.

The diagram below shows the continuous process of capacity development:<sup>1</sup>

Capacity development is an ongoing process that needs to be carefully planned right from the start and agreed with the senior management in each organisation. This will ensure the learnings from different activities is applied in practice, and that the right people are involved at each stage so that the learning becomes embedded in the organisation.

The type of capacity development that WaterAid will support depends on the purpose of the partnership, the existing capacity of the partners and what other opportunities exist for relevant capacity development. Where it is essential for the success of a project, the resources required for capacity development should be part of the project budget and included in the proposal to donors.

These steps can be adapted and used in different ways for different contexts.



1. UNDP (2008). *Capacity Assessment Methodology: User's Guide*. Available at: [undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/undp-capacity-assessment-methodology.html](http://undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/undp-capacity-assessment-methodology.html) (accessed 10 Nov 2020).

► Muluken Wondirad, Debre Tabor Water Utility Manager, assessing the water pipe network map, Debre Tabor, South Gondar, Amhara, Ethiopia, 2018. WaterAid Ethiopia has been implementing a Yorkshire Water-funded capacity development project in twenty towns across the country since 2014.



### Additional resources for capacity strengthening:

| Tool   | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>                | Section 6 gives principles and guidelines on developing finance capacity with partners.   |
| <b>UNDP Capacity Assessment Methodology User's Guide</b> | A step-by-step guide on how to conduct a capacity assessment using the UNDP Capacity Assessment Methodology, which consists of the UNDP Capacity Assessment Framework, a three-step process and supporting tools.                             |
| <b>Capacity needs assessment tool (BPD and GTF 2012)</b> | A tool for systematically assessing the capacity needs of all partners using the following categories; aspirations, strategy, skills, human resources, systems and infrastructures, structure and culture.                                    |
| <b>Safeguarding self-assessment tool</b>                 | A tool to assess a partners' safeguarding capacity, which will yield an overall score. This should be done as a joint exercise between the partner and CP. This assessment will feed back into the capacity needs assessment and action plan. |

# 6

## Conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms

- Put in place clear governance structures and processes to ensure transparency, responsiveness and compliance for all members of the partnership.
- Make sure all parties understand the implications of non-compliance with the partnership agreement.
- Avoid conflict through good communication and regular feedback and health checks.
- Clearly communicate conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms to all.

Disagreements between partners will always arise in collaborative efforts, and a healthy response to conflict can strengthen the partnership. This is helped by having an explicit system of conflict resolution and a grievance mechanism that is agreed between partners as an integral part of governance and accountability.

In any conflict resolution, it is good practice to look for common ground through **interest-based negotiation**, where different partners try to identify their common interest and use that as a basis for developing a solution that is acceptable to both.

### Mitigating and anticipating crises or conflict between partners

Good partnership monitoring and on-going feedback and communication should help to address differences between partners and avoid crises. The **partnership health check** in Section 3 is particularly helpful for identifying and addressing potential problems in the partnership.

It is also possible to anticipate some crises in the project plans and agreements by doing a thorough risk assessment to help avoid major conflicts later down the line. For example, agreeing what should be the procedure in a partnership if anticipated resources fail to materialise.



▲ Setou, 45, a member of the partnership-supported Benkadi women's group, standing with her two daughters at home in Kakounouso, Samabogo, Bla district, Segou, Mali, October 2019.

## Resolving disputes

If regular reporting and meetings fail to anticipate and resolve a problem, a more formalised approach to resolving the dispute may be required. In the first instance, it is a good idea to consider local practices and methods of dispute resolution that are culturally acceptable.

Agreed **grievance procedures** should set out a clear hierarchy of actions to deal with misunderstandings, disputes and conflicts. The following options could be used:

- A meeting between higher levels of management from each partner;
- Asking an outside, neutral or respected authority to assist in conflict resolution;
- Mediation by an external person, based on terms of reference agreed by all parties;
- Special audit or investigation procedures may be needed in some circumstances;
- Penalty and censure options for serious breaches of agreed commitments of the partnership that cannot be resolved through mediation.



▲ WaterAid Timor-Leste signed agreements with four local partners. The support will assist partners in the implementation of WASH activities in the community of Manufahi and Liquiça. Timor-Leste, July, 2020.

### Additional resources for conflict resolutions and grievance mechanisms:

| Tool  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Getting to Yes: Interests vs Positions</b>                                     | Short video that explains the importance of interest-based negotiation and how it can help to resolve difference.   |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Partnership Health Check</b>                    | Tool to facilitate a constructive dialogue about how to strengthen partnerships and address gaps or weaknesses. If this is done on a regular basis, serious conflicts are less likely to arise. |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Partnership negotiations and communications</b> | A tool to help practically and systematically consider ways to improve communications and feedback mechanisms with partners; and to improve external communications about your partnership.     |



## Exit or transition strategy

- Discuss exit strategies from the beginning of the partnership and review them regularly throughout the relationship.
- Allow time and communication for equitable feedback and complaints.
- Communicate clearly, raising and addressing any issues or concerns when they arise.

An exit or transition strategy refers to the way in which WaterAid leaves, ends or changes its partnership with other organisations. This may be planned or unplanned to varying degrees. For example:

- The partners involved in a programme may change over time and some may exit in a planned process.
- A partnership can end or change in a planned way after the partnership objectives have been achieved.
- Unplanned exit may occur due to non-compliance, poor governance and accountability, changing incentives and other unforeseen factors.
- A change of vision or mission arising from new strategy or direction.

### **A well-developed phasing-out and sustainability plan**

is particularly relevant for long-term partnerships. But even in short-term partnerships it is important to consider how to end or transform the relationship at the end of the partnership agreement period.

Planning how to **phase out the project** to ensure the sustainability of the outputs and outcomes of the project – all relevant stakeholders should be involved in developing this initial plan.

- Key elements are likely to include: management roles and responsibilities, training, financing mechanisms for operations and maintenance (O&M) and asset maintenance, and long-term sustainability monitoring.

Planning how to **phase out the partnership** to ensure a smooth transition and limit any negative impact on the partner organisation and its staff – particularly if the organisation is reliant on its partnership with WaterAid for funding.

The plan should consider how to sustain the capacity that has been developed through the partnership and explore opportunities to develop a non-funded partnership.

- Key elements may include: sourcing alternative funding, organisational development and opportunities for future collaboration (e.g. through advocacy and networks).

Exit strategies should be planned from the start of any partnership and be carefully implemented to ensure the benefits of the partnership are sustained for all parties, even beyond the lifetime of the partnership agreement period. With funded partnerships in particular, there can often be a sense of financial dependency. This can be addressed through developing an organisation's capacity to raise its own funds and develop a fundraising strategy.

An exit strategy needs to consider the following to ensure a smooth, effective and efficient transition for both parties:

### Decision-making

- Develop guidelines setting out decision-making, dispute and communication processes and key activities towards exit.
- Involve senior staff from each organisation.
- Regular partnership reviews to revise and refine the exit plan.
- Consider the potential implications of organisational reviews and evaluations on each partnership and modify the exit plan as necessary.

### Communication

- Partnership agreements should include exit processes, which should be discussed at the start of the partnership.
- Formal communications should be followed up by personal communication.
- Develop a communication plan for all stakeholders to ensure everyone is aware of any change in the relationship.
- Communication should be open, honest, clear and empathetic, with feedback and active listening by all.

### Processes

- Exit plans should be adapted to specific partnerships.
- Exit plans should include the process of withdrawal from the project and the partnership.
- It may be necessary to extend partnerships, and allocate sufficient resources for this, so that the exit process can be managed more effectively.

### Additional resources for exiting a partnership:

| Tool   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <a href="#">Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</a>   | Section 8 of this guide sets out principles and guidelines for planned and unplanned exits from partnerships from a finance perspective.           |
| <a href="#">Partnerships in practice tool: Partnership selection and exit processes</a>  | Exercise to develop partnership selection and partnership exit processes.  |
| <a href="#">From an implementing partnership with local NGOs to partnering with local government Sharing WaterAid Ethiopia's transition (2017)</a> | Paper on WaterAid Ethiopia's experience of transitioning from an implementing partnership with local NGOs to partnering with the local government. |



# Communication plans

**Good communication is essential at all stages of a partnership, so it is important to plan for this from the beginning.**

## Communication amongst partners

Partnerships can be improved by proactively reviewing the way that both internal and external communications work and how these can be improved. This can help to avoid challenging situations and miscommunication. If misunderstandings do arise, you can use the accompanying tools and resources to understand you and your partners' interests better and to make plans for more effective conversations.

Partnership agreements should be clear about the following:

- **Communication needs:** Make sure partners are clear about what needs to be communicated, how frequently, by whom and to whom.
- **Communication systems:** Establish a system of regular communication (face-to-face, electronic and written reports) and consider how effective the different methods are. Find out what barriers to communication are there and how can they be addressed.
- **Communication styles:** Find out whether partners communicate in similar ways. Agree on how to overcome any barriers due to communication style.

This tool on [partnership negotiations and communications](#) provides key questions to review to ensure communication amongst partners is clear and effective.

## Internal communication

Communication is also essential **within** each organisation between all the staff who are directly involved with the partnership and the managers who are responsible for making decisions about the partnership. This will ensure a consistent approach to partners across WaterAid.

Each organisation should have regular discussions about its partnerships. Standardised agendas can ensure that important issues relating to partnerships are covered. This could include issues with resources; implementation challenges, learning opportunities; external perceptions of the partnership; potential for future shocks and potential for further collaboration.

## External communication

Partners often have different requirements and approaches to publicity. It is important to discuss how to deal with publicity, stakeholder engagement and the media more generally amongst partners, and to clarify the following:

- **Who needs what recognition?** – Do all partners want to be attributed? Do any partners need to promote themselves? How should the logos of different partners be displayed?
- **Agreeing on public relations** – Who needs to be consulted before a partner can make public statements? Which issues should each side of the partnership jointly speak?
- **Making commitments** – Under what circumstances and limits may a partner(s) make further commitments on behalf of the partnership? How are they documented?



WaterAid/Jordi Ruiz Cirera

▲ Viviana, 34, Comejenes Community Council President, at a water collection point supported by WaterAid in Comejenes, Riohacha, La Guajira, Colombia. March, 2017.

### Additional resources for communication plans:

| Tool   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Partnerships in practice tool: Partnership negotiations and communications</b></p> | <p>A tool to help practically and systematically consider ways to improve communications and feedback mechanisms with partners, and to improve external communications about your partnership.</p> |



WaterAid/Sibtain Haider

◀ WaterAid UK, WaterAid Pakistan met with Malik Amin Aslam and Hassan Nasir Jamy to discuss the current partnership between the ministry and WaterAid on 'Clean Green Pakistan' at Ministry of Climate Change, Islamabad, Pakistan. November, 2019.



## Measuring success in partnerships

### There are different dimensions of success in partnerships to consider:

#### Has the partnership resulted in effective programmes?

- Measured in terms of programme outputs and outcomes, and the extent to which all partners have contributed to the achievement.
- Assess whether the right organisations are involved in the specific relationships to achieve the objectives (e.g. by using the partnership mapping tool).
- Assess whether gaps or weaknesses in programme effectiveness are due to missing partners, low capacity or poor performance.

#### Are the partner organisations sustainable and strong actors in the WASH sector?

- Measured according to the capacity development objectives (e.g. by using the capacity needs assessment tools).
- This can also be assessed through participatory discussions to rate partners against criteria that are agreed to be most critical for the work. For example, the quality of technical work, advocacy effectiveness, community engagement, financial management and relationship management.
- Agree a 'red, amber or green' rating through qualitative discussion between WaterAid staff who work with the partner, to identify areas of high risk and suggest follow-up actions to be discussed with the partner.

### Better partnership practice amongst WaterAid staff:

- This can be measured internally, using self-assessment tools (e.g. the partnership building blocks from the BOND organisational health check).
- Get an external view of partner perceptions on WaterAid practice (e.g. the survey of partners carried out by Keystone Accountability).

### The quality and effectiveness of the partnership relationships:

- This can be done through a participatory review, using the [health check questions](#) in Section 3 as a basis for discussion between WaterAid and partners.
- It may sometimes be appropriate to commission an in-depth evaluation of partnership relations by a consultant to enable an objective process for identifying opportunities to improve partnership effectiveness.

## Additional resources for measuring success in partnerships:

| Tool   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Partnerships in practice tools: Health check</b>                                    | Use this exercise to monitor the health of a partnership on a regular basis.   |
| <b>Partnership building block indicators</b>   | Use this tool to see what aspects of partnership practice need to be strengthened in the WaterAid team.              |
| <b>Partnership feedback surveys – Keystone reports of WaterAid partner perceptions</b> | Report of surveys carried out by Keystone Accountability to gather feedback on WaterAid from its partners worldwide. |
| <b>Guidelines on Finance Partnerships</b>  | Section 7 gives guidance for carrying out an annual review of partners from a finance perspective.                   |

► Taslima is a volunteer for Efforts for Rural Advancement in Sunamganj Tahirpur, Bangladesh. October, 2019.



WaterAid/Tapas Paul

# 10

## Working with different types of organisation

WaterAid collaborates with many different types of organisation. This can often be challenging especially if they are non-WASH organisations, as they may have different incentives, objectives, processes and cultures to those at WaterAid. For example, these challenges may be faced when working with government agencies, academic institutions, social networks, rights organisations or institutions from different sectors such as health, finance or education.

The following questions provide a useful framework to analyse the dynamics in other organisations to help find common synergies and effective ways of working together:

- What do you need to know about them? What are their processes, planning cycles, and approaches to decision-making? What are the power dynamics within the organisation?
- How can you integrate your work with their plans and priorities?
- What is the best way to encourage and motivate them? What do they care about? What do they want from the relationship?
- What are the key areas to focus on with them?
- What is the best way to communicate and engage with them?
- What sort of agreements and compliance work best?

### Working with governments

The roles and responsibilities of government and WaterAid must be clearly defined at the start of the partnership to ensure effective and accountable working relationships. A government is the legitimate actor or 'duty bearer' responsible for the equitable access of WASH services for all. WaterAid has a role to support governments in fulfilling these responsibilities.

There are many challenges in working with government actors. These include political interference, limited resources, limited decision-making authority, high staff turnover, low capacity or motivation, weak sector coordination, overlapping or unclear roles and responsibilities.

### Tips from WaterAid's experience

#### Analyse and assess

- Power dynamics between WaterAid and governments and the different government levels and departments.
- Strengths and capacity gaps of government to identify WaterAid's 'added value'.
- Align WaterAid activities with government policies, priorities and guidelines.
- The interests and incentives of government staff – work with government 'champions' to overcome the challenges they face in implementing their responsibilities.

## Incentivise encourage and motivate

- Respect the roles, responsibilities, knowledge and commitment of government staff – involve them from the early stage of projects and promote their leadership.
- Capacity development can help motivate government staff, such as mentoring schemes, professional training, peer exchanges and/or exchange visits.
- Design small, strategic interventions with clear outputs that can deliver impact that government staff can showcase as successful models.

## Integrate

- Design or adapt project plans to align with government priorities, plans and timeframes to encourage government ‘buy-in’ and mobilise funding opportunities.
- Where possible, integrate work into government-led systems and government departments outside the WASH sector (e.g. planning, local government, health and education).
- Commit to long-term partnerships in specific districts to build trust and mutual accountability.
- Support the coordination of government and WASH sector actors.

## Fit-for-purpose governance

- Involve key departments and staff from the start to get commitment and support – this often includes departments outside WASH, such as planning.
- Identify the most appropriate forms of agreement (verbal, formal or informal MoU) that need to be signed at different levels of government (district/provincial/national) to ensure ownership of the project and continuity if key individuals leave their role.
- Clarify mutual objectives, roles and responsibilities, and agree on an exit strategy.
- Establish appropriate arrangements to overcome bureaucratic or complicated processes – this often applies to financial management of joint activities.
- Hold a formal meeting with government partners to commemorate the partnership.

## Working with academic and research institutions

WaterAid often works with academic institutions to develop evidence to support advocacy or practice change.

Challenges often arise due to differing priorities and incentives. For example, academics need to take time to develop sound methodology, publish in peer reviewed journals and protect their intellectual property. Practitioners need to integrate research with programmatic timelines, share findings in practical ways and promote the learning as widely as possible.

## Tips from WaterAid’s experience

- Meet and get to know each other early in the process. Plan the project and budget carefully together.
- Identify project leads in both institutions to coordinate and ensure open communication. Connect on a regular basis with monthly catch-up calls.
- Review and re-review the research protocol. Both sides need to feel comfortable to come forward with questions, doubts, challenges in implementation or in following the research protocol. Throughout the research, continue to check-in that everything around the research and implementation activities are clear. Keep sharing challenges and highlights.
- Agree from the beginning about ownership of the research findings and any restrictions on sharing these before publication.
- Dissemination focus will be different for both sides, so discuss this early on in the process to understand the audiences and purpose of each document and plan a clear way forward. For example, laying out roles and responsibilities for writing, reviewing and disseminating findings to different audiences through different channels.

## Collaboration with Civil Society Organisations, including women's rights organisations and disabled persons organisations

WaterAid often partners with Civil Society Organisations, including organisations or groups that represent the rights of marginalised people, to help support and amplify their voice, participation and benefits in WASH efforts. Both partners can benefit from these collaborations. WaterAid will gain from the experience, specialist knowledge and networks of the rights organisation that help make WASH programmes more inclusive and strengthen advocacy for the human rights to water and sanitation. The rights organisation will benefit from a better understanding of WASH and can use this as a practical focus for advocacy. Where the partnership is for a funded project, this can fund the development of practical skills and knowledge for both WASH and rights organisations.

Common challenges in these partnerships include the power and wealth imbalance between WaterAid and such organisations, so it is particularly important to pay attention to the principles of respect, equity and mutual accountability, and ensure both parties benefit from the partnership.

The following recommendations on partnerships were agreed through discussion between WASH organisations, women's rights organisations (WROs) and disabled persons organisations (DPOs), and from a consultation with partners led by [Womankind Worldwide](#):

### Co-creation, transparency and knowledge sharing

- Value the knowledge and expertise of all partners: Staff in WASH organisations need to develop their own knowledge and understanding of the rights and realities of women and people with disabilities as the first step in developing an inclusive and empowering approach to WASH. WROs and DPOs are often able to provide awareness raising or sensitisation sessions for WASH actors. They can also act as advisors on WASH projects.

This capacity development and advisory role should be funded and documented in the partnership agreement.

- Adopt transparent, inclusive decision-making processes rooted in collective leadership and shared knowledge: Share knowledge, design projects together, co-create review processes and share donor reports. Consider who is not represented when decisions are made.

### Challenge power imbalances

- Make redistribution of power a focus of the partnership. Recognise and respect the leadership of the rights organisations, especially in advocacy. Consider how to reduce power imbalance in all meetings, discussions and partnership processes.

### People

- Respect the human rights of staff in partner organisations. Actively seek to support their care and well-being. Avoid creating unnecessary stress through unrealistic deadlines. Make safeguarding central in the relationship.

### Communication, feedback and conflict

- Learn and understand from the partners. Give them space and a voice, and encourage feedback. Take any critical feedback constructively, discuss disagreements and find ways to build consensus. Give full visibility and credit to the partner in communications about the project.

### Funding

- Where possible, provide and advocate for flexible and sustainable funding, including core funding. Reduce and simplify bureaucratic requirements for organisations with less administrative capacity, but high value as a partner.

## Partnership dynamics and agreements

- Outline **clear roles and responsibilities** between the WASH organisations, and other Civil Society Organisations such as DPOs and WROs, following the following three key points:
  - a) Sign an **MoU** describing the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved – including the decision-making processes. Fully recognise the contributions and added value of the partners’ knowledge, experience and contacts.
  - b) **Review roles regularly** to avoid potential issues with capacity and responsibilities of the parties not being fulfilled as agreed. Ensure any readjustment of the partnership as a result of the review is owned by all participants.
  - c) **Engage as equals** throughout the partnership.



▲ Kolo Frijof, Mayor of Morondava commune and Saidson Robson Bruno, leader of the centre for people living with disability, Morondava commune, shaking hands after their meeting. Mayor’s office, Morondava commune, Menabe region. Madagascar, August 2018.

## Additional resources for working with different types of organisations:

| Tool  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Make Rights Real</b>   | This approach identifies local government ‘champions of WASH’, supporting them to better understand their roles as duty bearers and how they can fulfil their responsibilities to ensure access to WASH for all.              |
| <b>Working with government learning brief</b>                     | Analysis of lessons learnt by different CPs from experiences of working with government.  |
| <b>Lessons on a feminist approach to partnership</b>              | Blog by feminist consultant Leila Billing: <i>What’s the problem with partnerships in international development? We need a feminist approach...</i>   |
| <b>Powerful Partnership: Womankind learning paper</b>             | Learning paper on the power of programmes that challenge harmful traditional practices – lessons from Kenya and Tanzania.   |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tool: Assessing incentives</b>        | Use this tool to facilitate an honest discussion about the priorities of different partners – outlining what the differences are and how to make sure the collaborative work helps each organisation meet its own objectives. |
| <b>Partnerships in practice tools: Roles and responsibilities</b> | Use this tool to discuss with partners what each of you will bring to the collaboration, who will be responsible for what, and to pinpoint any gaps and risks.  |



WaterAid/Dennis Lupenga

◀ Aless, 43, in front of the Mbira water kiosk, built with support from Thames Water and the Malawi Central Region Water Board, with a bucket on her head after collecting clean water, Kasungu, Malawi, March 2020.

Front top: Jonathan, 65, Nyamalimbe Village Chairman in meeting with village health team members, Nyamalimbe Village, Geita District, Tanzania, June, 2018.

Front bottom: Mariam and Oumou, members of the Benkadi women's group, standing together next to a papaya tree, inside their market garden at Kakounouso, Samabogo, Bla district, Segou, Mali. October, 2019.

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**WaterAid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Only by tackling these three essentials in ways that last can people change their lives for good.**

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