

Accountability means that those who are responsible, accept responsibility for their actions and omissions, and accept that they are called upon to give an account of why and how they have acted or failed to act.

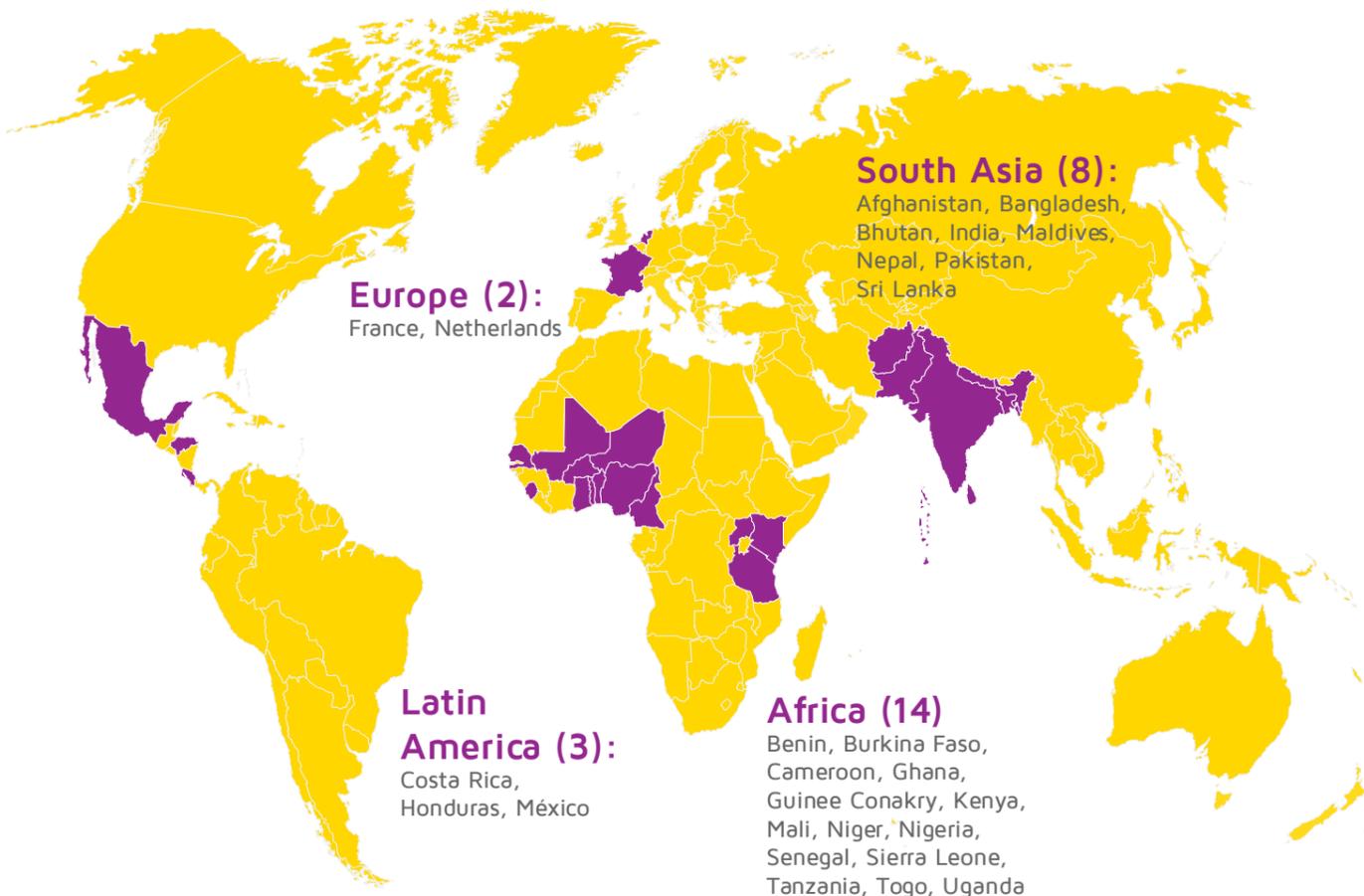
Effective accountability mechanisms are considered transparent, engage a diversity of stakeholders, facilitate and encourage critical reflection on progress, and are responsive to issues addressed by stakeholders. More than just seeking to correct past wrongs, accountability mechanisms are forward-looking, seeking to influence government actions in the future, making them more responsive to the SDG 6 targets and the needs of citizens.

At the international level, the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) has a central role in reviewing progress towards achieving the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda, however, provides little detail on the HLPF accountability structure. The accountability mechanisms for international SDG commitments are of a voluntary nature, without guidelines, and are viewed by many as untransparent, unfit for purpose tick-box exercises.

At the national level, every country has its own set of institutional structures and mechanisms to implement and report on the achievement of SDG 6 targets. This study has investigated the nature of the existing accountability mechanisms at national level, challenges and opportunities.



copyright: WSSCC



Key Recommendations:

For Governments

- Pull Together
- Build a stronger voice
- Be accountable

For CSOs

- Get your act together
- Make your voice stronger
- Be accountable

For Development partners

- Finance good governance:
- Beyond one-off multi-stakeholder workshops
- Be accountable for "leaving no one behind"

For United Nations agencies

- The High Level Political Forum needs to recognise the role of CSOs in SDG 6

Global Review of National Accountability Mechanisms for SDG 6

Preliminary findings DRAFT March 2018

It has been almost three years since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030". According to WHO/UNICEF 2017, it is estimated that 30% of people worldwide, or 2.1 billion, still lack access to safe, readily available water at home, and 60%, or 4.5 billion, lack safely managed sanitation.

In a majority of low and middle income countries, progress is too slow to reach SDG 6 by 2030 and there are decreasing trends in at least 20 countries.

Governments are accountable for their formal commitments under SDG 6 and have committed to engage in systematic follow-up and review of implementation. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions "a world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene".

This document is a summary of a study on country-level accountability mechanisms for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6

Key findings from the country studies

In most countries, accountability mechanisms for SDG 6 are not available. When reported, accountability mechanisms have been mentioned as not effective, and are limited mostly to targets 6.1 and 6.2

Hardly any of the countries report clear responsibilities for SDG 6 specifically. Overall, responsibilities for the SDGs are allocated among various ministries, often chaired by high-level officials.

SDG 6-related targets are unclear and scattered among different departments, or responsibilities are not identified or allocated at all. When mentioned, accountability mechanisms in country studies are available only for targets 6.1 and 6.2.

Most of the accountability mechanisms and tools brought forward in the country studies are standalone events and not part of a systematic structured approach to accountability. Stakeholders in most countries are not aware of their governments preparing for a review on SDG 6 progress by the HLPF in July 2018.

Few country studies referred to the possibility of holding the Government accountable for progress on the SDG 6 targets through complaint, grievance and enforcement mechanisms or other existing human rights mechanisms .

Among many civil society organisations (CSOs) there is confusion about their own role, responsibilities and mandates regarding SDG 6. In many countries, stakeholders reported a lack of coordination and sharing of information and learning between sector CSOs and other relevant stakeholders. There are no concrete modalities set out for independent civil society monitoring, progress assessment and reporting on SDG 6.

Standards for institutionalised participation of civil society at the international and national voluntary review processes for SDG 6 have never been set.

Accountability mechanisms implemented by governments include joint sector reviews, sector events and committees or independent bodies consisting of different stakeholders tasked with the responsibility for the implementation or monitoring of SDG 6. In a number of countries, different

stakeholders take active part in gathering data and monitoring practices. They play a validation role through consultation in reporting processes.

Accountability tools established by civil society include conferences and events that allow for advocacy, coordination among participants, and sharing of learning and best practices. Shadow reporting and auditing exercises were considered a valuable accountability tool as they point government actors towards their commitments in line with corresponding budgets.

Accountability overall is hindered by a lack of adequate monitoring and reporting on SDG 6, limited progress on implementation of commitments and limited opportunity for CSOs to contribute to monitoring SDG 6 and to submit independent reviews.

Most countries in the study reported that they are still in the initial stages of developing a systematic process for monitoring and review that generates evidence on sector progress towards SDG 6 and allows for multi-stakeholder involvement. Global monitoring instruments are often used for tracking progress towards SDG 6 at national level.

Some countries are still developing and mapping SDG 6 baselines, indicators and targets and are in the process of developing new systems for data collection. Some country studies have indicated that governments have just finalised, or are in the process of conducting, a data gap-analysis to bring national monitoring mechanisms more in line with the 2030 Agenda.

The SDGs emphasise that we must “leave no one behind” and yet in most surveyed countries data is incomplete, inadequate and not disaggregated enough to allow for tracking progress on reaching the most marginalised groups (i.e. the poorest, indigenous groups, refugees and the elderly).

The study indicates that government-led monitoring mechanisms in some countries serve as a platform for civil society to provide input and validate existing data. Some country studies conclude that decentralised mechanisms are often more easily accessible for CSOs to influence and hold government actors accountable on progress towards SDG 6.



Challenges reported by country studies

There are many challenges with the few existing, reported accountability mechanisms. At present, most are simply not good enough to hold governments accountable to their SDG 6 commitments.

Challenges reported by country studies regarding the functioning and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms include the lack of a legal basis for existing mechanisms, the irregularity of the accountability processes and the limited extent of follow-up of outcomes from such processes. Stakeholders representing different constituencies are often present at meetings, but the format of the meetings and consultations limit their effective participation.

Country studies have also reported on barriers to CSO participation in existing accountability mechanisms such as not being invited and the inability to participate equally. In a number of countries, meaningful consultation is hindered due to the difficult relationship between government and CSOs.

Challenges at the CSO level include a failure to represent smaller organisations in their constituencies or voices from grassroots level. Furthermore, there is a lack of diversity of stakeholders and representation of marginalised people in the mechanisms mentioned.

A major challenge often referred to by many countries is that financing and budget allocations are often insufficient for the well-functioning of accountability mechanisms, or the viability of CSOs to effectively participate in holding governments accountable to SDG 6.

Opportunities reported by country studies

Almost all CSOs and government officials consulted agreed that participation in accountability mechanisms for SDG 6 have a positive impact when carried out in an effective, meaningful way.

Country studies indicated that participation in accountability mechanisms strengthens partnerships between civil society, government and other stakeholders and improves coordination of actions and allocation of roles and responsibilities. The role of traditional media is often mentioned as an important and powerful accountability accelerator, as it can be used as an awareness creation tool and to put public pressure on the government to take responsibilities for its decisions with regard to water and sanitation.

Country studies indicate that participatory accountability mechanisms have the potential to increase political attention and funding for SDG 6. Moreover, it leads to capacity building within government for implementation of SDG 6. Participation in accountability mechanisms can also lead to better and more effective ways for the collection of data and monitoring practices, which can successfully influence government policy making, and an increased attention on marginalised areas, grassroots communities, and vulnerable groups.





copyright: Akvo



Recommendations for governments

Governments are accountable for their formal commitments under SDG 6 and must realise the human right to water and sanitation. Investing in effective national accountability mechanisms will support progress towards Agenda 2030 ambitions.

1. Take the lead

Ensure transparent allocation of roles and responsibilities for data collection, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of commitments and progress on all SDG 6 targets. Make sure the review on sector progress towards SDG 6 is systematically done.

2. Make it happen

Develop official accountability mechanisms at national and local level that allow meaningful consultation of all stakeholders on a regular basis. Invest in citizens' engagement and the necessary capacity building and knowledge sharing initiatives. Make sure that there are mechanisms for enforcement of decisions.

3. Be inclusive

Make sure accountability mechanisms for SDG 6 targets include all stakeholders and ensure the representation of excluded/marginalised groups.



Recommendations for CSOs

WASH sector organisations and human rights organisations seem to work alongside each other without profiting from each other's expertise. The processes of change required to reach SDG 6 takes time and you cannot do it on your own. Connect with others and strategise together.

1. Pull together

Build capacity and create awareness of SDG 6 targets and corresponding national commitments and policies. Create strong partnerships among CSOs, increase the coordination and communication among all stakeholders to join and support existing platforms and networks for holding the government accountable for their commitments.

2. Build a stronger voice

Actively involve grassroots and marginalised groups to understand their needs and challenges. Include their voice in advocacy and in consultations with government. Document the evidence and share this often unwritten knowledge.

3. Be accountable

Accountability starts with your organisation and network. Be accountable to your constituency – not just to your donors – and actively seek feedback on your activities to hold governments accountable to SDG 6.



Recommendations for development partners

Financing water governance is as important as financing infrastructure. CSOs have a key role to play in holding governments accountable on progress towards SDG 6.

1. Finance good governance

Donors should continue to support the aid effectiveness agenda and work within government frameworks and priorities. Engage with governments on national sector development strategies and plans, particularly on the need for national accountability mechanisms and strengthening CSOs' role within them.

2. Beyond one-off multi-stakeholder workshops

Support governments and CSOs with the technical and financial means to establish formal, regular and inclusive multi-stakeholder accountability mechanisms for the implementation of SDG 6. One-off irregular sector events remain relevant, but are not effective accountability mechanisms.

3. Be accountable for "leaving no one behind"

Increase accountability on the use of your own funds that contribute to the achievement of SDG 6. Make sure that the monitoring and reporting on the spending of your funds have disaggregated data on progress towards reaching the most marginalised people, who traditionally have no voice in the implementation of SDG 6.



Recommendation for United Nations agencies

There needs to be well-defined opportunities for effective engagement of CSOs in review mechanisms.

The High Level Political Forum needs to recognise the role of CSOs in SDG 6 and to adopt recommendations and guidelines for national governments to establish and use national accountability mechanisms for reporting on SDG 6.

Recognise the important role that civil society organisations play in assisting with effective SDG implementation, as well as providing reliable information on progress for marginalised and vulnerable persons.



copyright: IRC

This study was led by CSOs in 27 countries under the umbrella of End Water Poverty, Watershed Consortium, Coalition Eau and WSSCC. The study took place between October 2017 and March 2018.

The process and the results of the study aim to strengthen CSOs' capacity to advocate for improved accountability mechanisms and for their involvement in decision-making and follow-up actions around progress towards SDG 6. This study has facilitated - and in many instances started - a much-needed conversation in-country between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

At the international level, the aim of the study is to inform the development of accountability mechanisms within the HLPF.

The results of the study are based on more than 800 surveys, interviews and validation meetings with stakeholders working on water resources, drinking water and sanitation sector in 27 countries. Stakeholders who participated voluntarily in this study include governments (national and decentralised), CSOs, non-governmental organisations, development partners, UN agencies, research and education institutions, and think tanks. The private sector and trades unions representation in the study has been limited.