Summary

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) are collaborative mechanisms that bring together actors from a variety of backgrounds interested to work on a specific challenge or explore an opportunity together. MSPs vary in their degree of institutionalisation, can take various forms, and can operate at different geographic scales – from local to regional, national, and transboundary. This tool provides guidance on what are some of the key principles on how to set up and maintain effective MSPs in water sector and beyond.

What are Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships?

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) can be defined as collaborative mechanisms that bring together different types of stakeholders, i.a., civil society, private sector, governments, international organisations, media, academia, NGOs, and research institutions. MSPs share experience, information, technologies, and other resources towards solving a common challenge or pursuing an opportunity. MSPs often tackle "wicked problem" that could not be solved by single-agent interventions. Each actor thus contribute to the MSP by bringing in their own set of skills and complementary resources. For instance, an MSP trying to expanding irrigation to small farmers communities may benefit from the financial resources that agricultural cooperatives bring, from the innovative technology that private sectors have, and from the technical knowledge that government extension workers have to offer. A foundational idea to MSPs is that the whole is greater than of its parts.

General characteristics of the operation of an MSP include defining a common framework and securing inclusion and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in the process. The advantage of an MSP as a cooperative workspace lies in the assumption that it increases the efficiency in the

solution finding process and in the implementation of the adopted measures. Stakeholders must be able to influence the process and decisions made, regardless of whether they dispose of large resources or not, and regardless of their belonging to a particular social group. In this regard, an efficient MSP must consider the power relations and hierarchies within one community and address challenges in terms of gender or age (and the differences between old/young actors). Facilitators play a vital role in managing MSP processes and ensuring that traditionally maginalised people(s) are meaningfully involved.

MSP in the Water Sector

A variety of actors operating across politico-adminstrative and hydrological boundaries take water resources management decisions. One of the key principles of IWRM requires the active collaboration and coordination of policymakers, donors, NGOs, water managers, water supply companies, farmers, industries, and communities, etc.. MSPs are therefore key institutional mechanisms for ensuring that these decisions are made in a coordinated and coherent way. MSPs are platforms that have the

potential to act as innovative incubators for sustainable financing, conflict resolution, democratizing water management. Guaranteeing the human right to water and sanitation (Tool A2.05) and reaching a water secure world will and cannot be reached if concerned actors continue to take decisions and act in silos.

Six different types of MSPs can be distinguished in the water sector (Warner, 2005):

- **MSPs as social network**: these are traditionally set up to help disputing parties understand other stakeholder's views and interests (Yakunchik MSP in Peru);
- MSPs as focus groups: found in planning and visioning processes, involving a relatively low investment (e.g. women's groups convined by NGOs in development project contexts);
- MSPs as service organisations: which offers the advantage of the breadth of the network to generate an external support, catering to a collective need (e.g., the Sabarmati MSP in India);
- MSPs as crisis management organisations: allowing to tackle issues where normal negociations fail (e.g., Tiquipaya MSP in Bolivia);
- MSPs as action alliances: where a multi-sectorial network forms to join forces against a common touchstone (e.g., Country Water Partnerships);
- MSPs as initiated by governments or river basin organisations (RBO): where hydrology rather than territorial administrative or cultural boundaries dictate the management scale, states are forced to work together (e.g., Agences de l'Eau).

Principles for Effective MSPs

Academics, research institutes, and UN organisations have tried to pin down are the ingredients that make up an effective MSP (e.g. Brouwer and Woodhill, 2016; Gray and Jill, 2018; UNDP, 2006). A set of commonly agreed upon principles for setting up and maintaining an effective MSP include:

- Embrace systemic change; going through steps like a context analysis to assess the complexity of a situation and the use of methodologies like soft system methodology which focuses on inter-relationships, perspectives and boundaries.
- Establish a fit-for-purpose MSP; respecting the MSP's goals and missions, as well as operational needs, and potential issues.
- Transform institutions; taken as all the rules (political, legal, social, cultural, economic or religious) of a society. The challenge is to encourage a change of these rules, norms and values from people by taking into account the beliefs, the policies and strategies, the regular practices of the actors, and their relationships.
- Create a multi-layered platform; to address the complexity of working with cross-sectoral and cross-level actors so to facilitate the collaboration

- Work with country priorities; this will strengthen the capacity and encourage the deliver of finance and other means of support.
- Work with power; analyzing the power and how it's exercised (by domination or control, individually, collectively with the ability to act together) makes for one possible to influence the power structures, influence powerful stakeholders, empowerement ("power to empower others") of individuals or collective group(s) being valued within an MSP.
- Deal with conflict; whether it is constitutive to the MSP or emerges in it, it's essential to address it in a constructive approach (through an interest-based negotiation) so the actors can continue to work together.
- Communicate effectively; directly linked to the previous principle, involves a non-violent communication between the stakeholders and an active listening from them, important to acknowledge the cultural differences, which could lead to quid pro quo or tensions.
- Promote collaborative leadership; relies to the challenge within an MSP to share the leadership responsibilities which concern the fact to bring together, support, inform, etc.
- Foster participatory learning; determinant since the actors have the opportunity to learn from each other and reflect on the process and the ways they have collaborate so the whole process can be improved in the future.

Thematic Tagging
Gender Youth

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