
G W I R E A D E R S U R V E Y • M A Y 2 0 2 6

Engaging with the UN Water agenda

Findings of relevance to water solution providers

306

respondents

49%

solution providers

~120

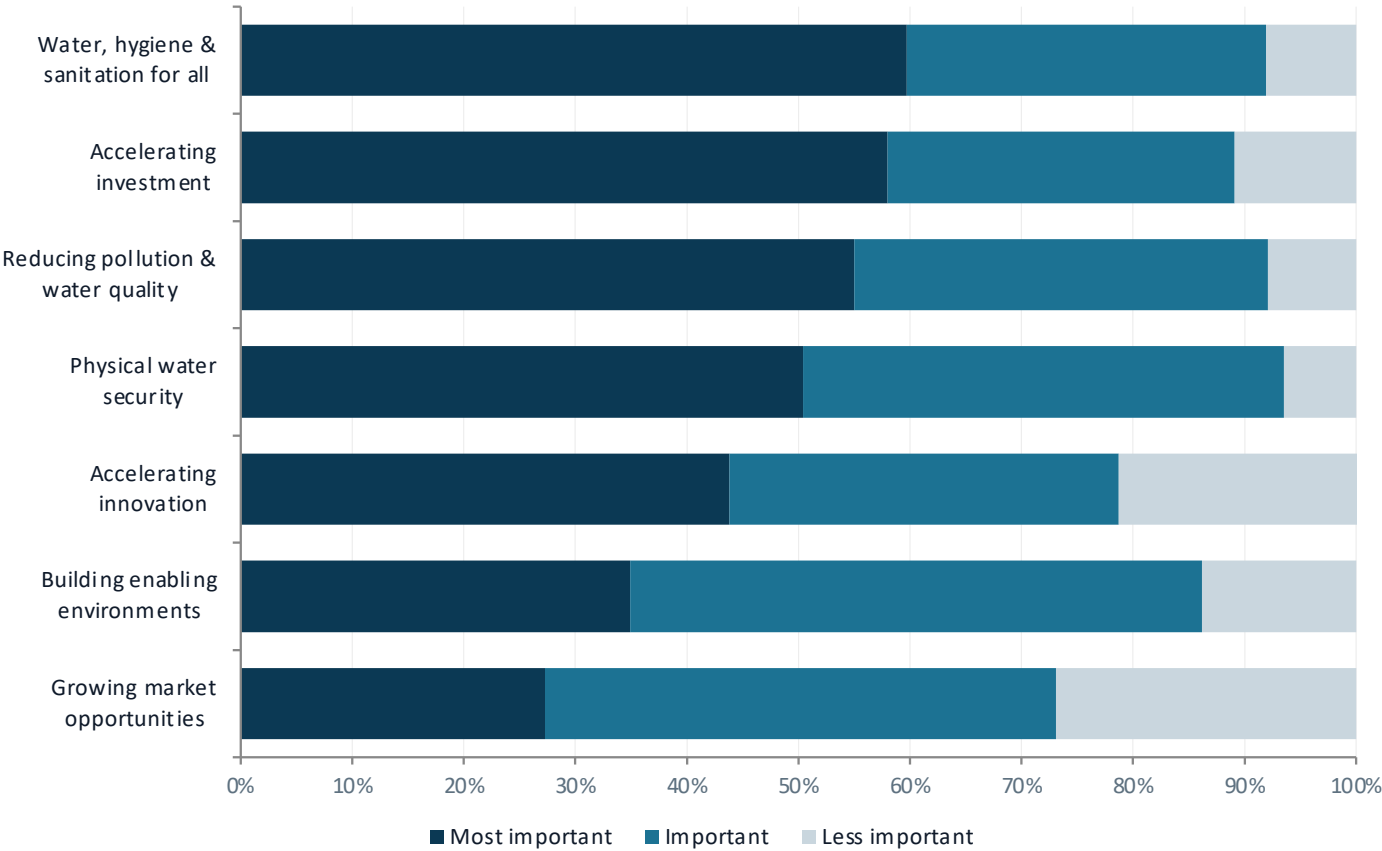
answered sector-specific Qs

67%

see UN role in financial structures

Where solution providers see urgency

The biggest challenges where UN engagement could be most beneficial (Q4, full sample n≈275–283)



The signal

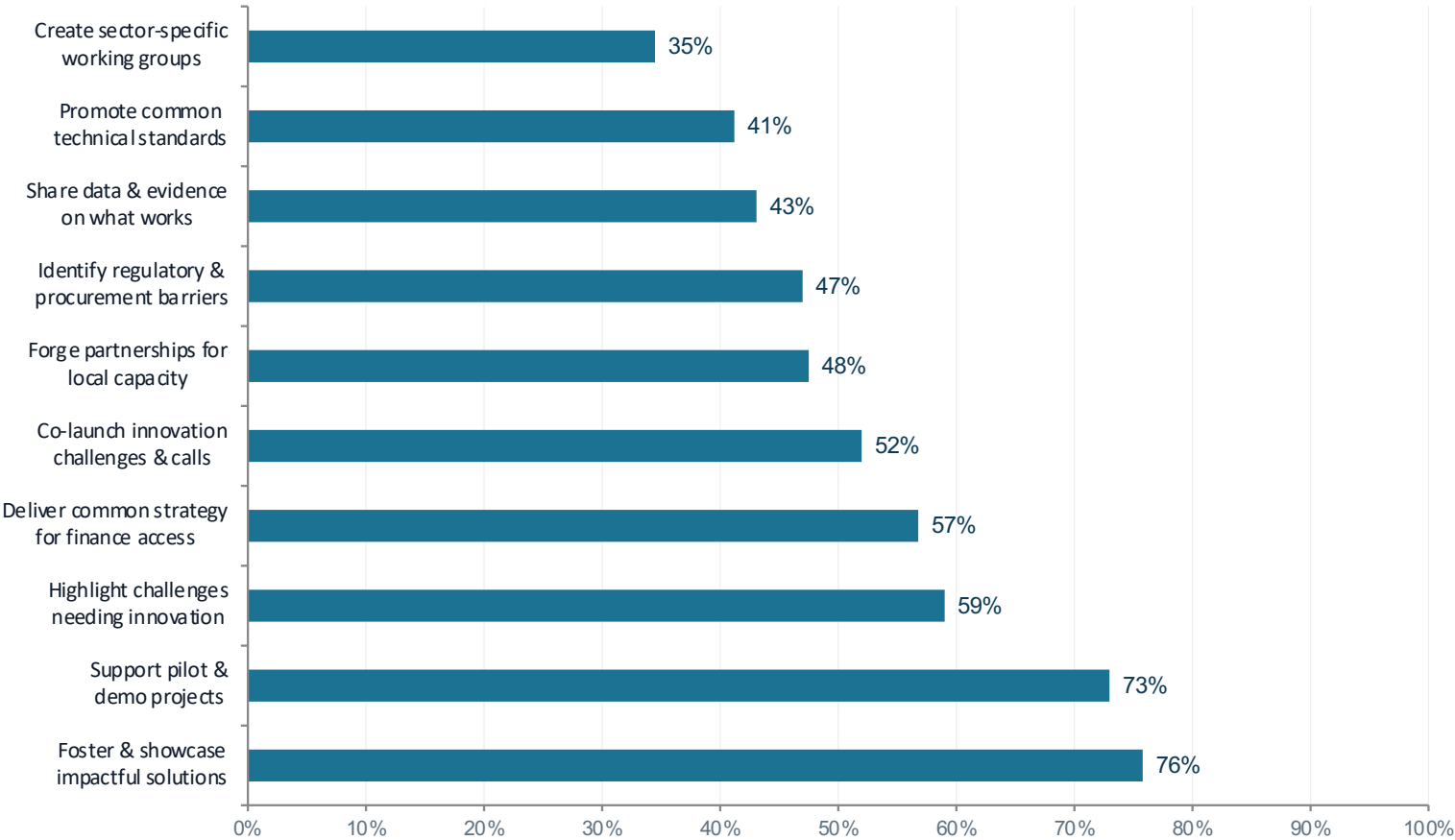
Four challenges

rated "most important" by a majority of respondents.

Sanitation, investment and pollution lead — but accelerating innovation matters to nearly 80%, signalling where the solution-provider audience expects to engage.

How the UN can accelerate water innovation

% of respondents who say each role would "definitely" accelerate innovation (Q14, n≈116–123)



Two clear winners

Showcase solutions and **support pilots** are the roles solution providers most clearly want from UN engagement.

Finance access ranks higher than technical standards or sector working groups — visibility plus a pathway to capital is the demand.

The obstacles to contributing to SDG6

Obstacles cited as most important by solution-provider-dominated respondents (Q15, n≈116–121)

65%

Governments focus on low capital-cost bids rather than lifecycle costs

56%

Public agencies lack budgets to pay for products and services

45%

Regulatory uncertainty or inconsistent standards across markets

44%

Perceptions of corruption and lack of procurement transparency

42%

Potential customers unaware of the benefits of products/services

40%

Governments have limited project-preparation funding to pilot and scale

36%

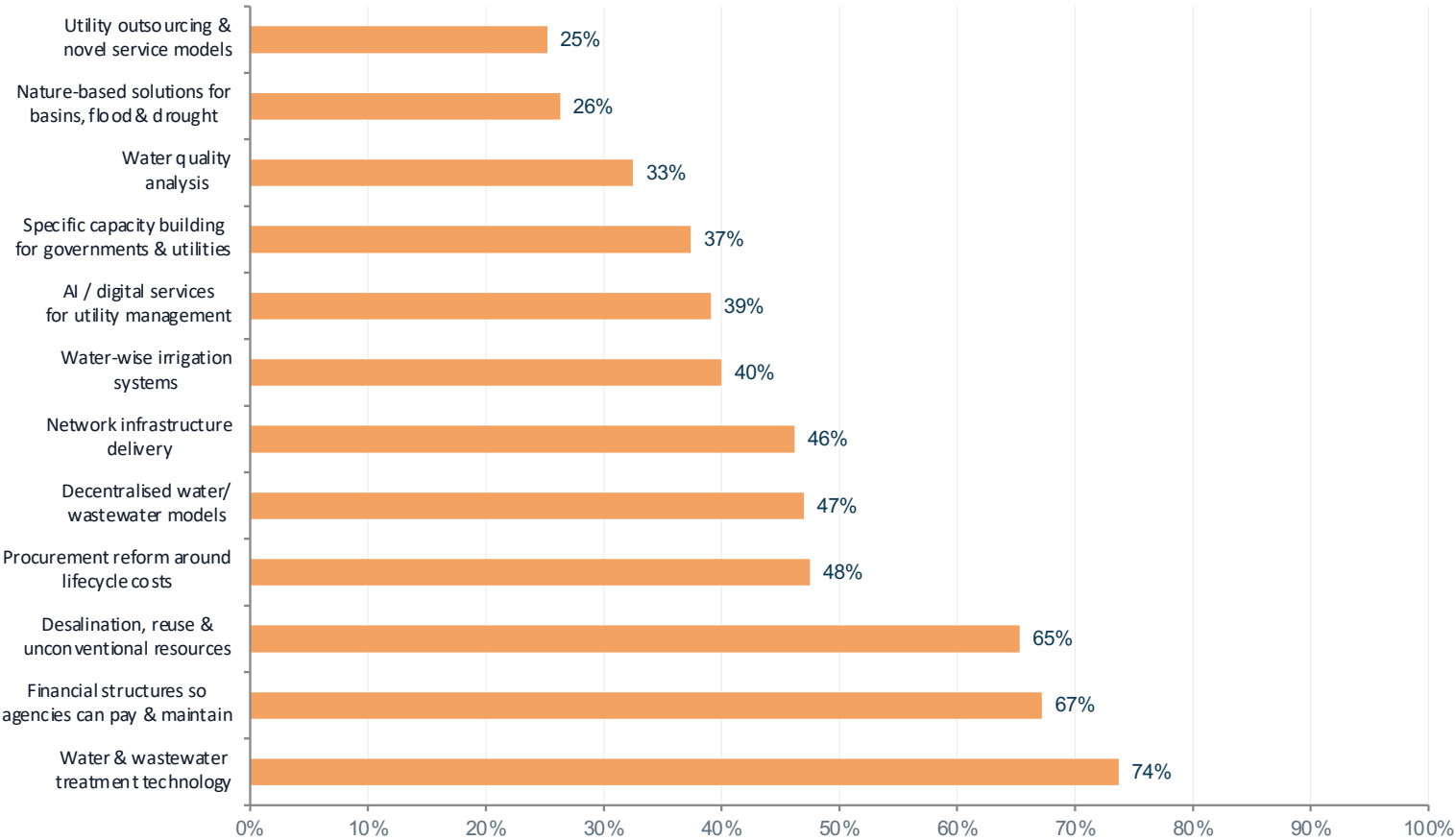
Profit margins in LMICs unattractive due to risk and unpredictability

34%

Public agencies lack the capacity to procure or operate solutions

Where solution providers see innovation impact

% rating each area as having "significant impact" on SDG6 (Q16, n≈114–120)



Two themes dominate

Treatment technology and desalination/reuse — the asset classes solution providers most often build — top the list.

But financial structures to let agencies pay for and maintain solutions sit second — ahead of any specific technology area.

In their own words — the diagnosis

How solution providers describe the structural problems they face

On the pilot-to-procurement gap

“Pilots are funded, but no pre-committed adoption pathway, budget line or contracting vehicle exists for scale.”

— Qiphlow (Q15)

On the bankability gap

“A major barrier is the gap between proven technology and bankable implementation pathways — where owners lack technical staff, pilot funding or lifecycle procurement models.”

— Nalco Water, an Ecolab Company (Q15)

On pilot funding constraints

“Pilot demonstrations need funding but need not run for one or two years when data is available from existing plants. Technology developed outside the UN struggles with funding to establish local support structures.”

— Aldam Tech Ltd (Q15)

On lack of incentive to innovate

“Public agencies and utilities lack incentive to implement major change and innovation.”

— Transcend (Q15)

On bureaucratic drag

“The sheer bureaucracy and lack of proactivity are limiting factors on solving for the biggest problem that humankind is now facing.”

— Next View Global Pure Water Partners (Q15)

On political risk for utilities

“Government caution about political backlash on water consumption and household data; reputational and political risk of transparency on quality and non-revenue water; political discontinuity at regime change.”

— Qiphlow (Q15)

On standards fragmentation

“Different water-quality standards across countries slow scaling. Different regulations and procurement systems mean country-by-country rework.”

— Qiphlow (Q15)

On the water-energy nexus

“Integration of energy and water — where the combination impacts the economics of off-grid deployment — is a cross-sector innovation that sits between SDG6 and SDG7 and currently lacks an institutional home in either.”

— Modulus Water (Q16)

In their own words — the call to action

What solution providers want from UN engagement

On a concrete asset class

“UN entities are uniquely positioned to help shift water infrastructure from massive, centralised plants to decentralised, renewable-powered small-to-mid-scale purification — where extending the traditional grid is uneconomic.”

— Solar Water Solutions Ltd. (Q4)

On reforming the bidding process

“We should reform the rigid and inefficient bidding process and instead promote a transparent, streamlined, and dialogue-based private implementation.”

— Aqualia Japan (Q4)

On pilots that lead somewhere

“I would like to be part of an action-oriented group to design experiments and pilot projects, and test innovations that deliver on the SDG goals.”

— Sustainable Synthesis Ltd., PBC (Q23)

On real-time monitoring

“Real-time consumption monitoring and anomaly detection at building and site level — closing the gap between large-scale infrastructure data and the granular insights operations managers need.”

— Shayp (Q16)

On connecting the stack

“Practical, implementation-focused models that connect technology, finance, industry users and political agencies — to accelerate water reuse, resilience and quality improvements.”

— Nalco Water, an Ecolab Company (Q9)

On showcasing what works

“Introduce innovations and applicable ideas through an integrated approach — presentations cited with success stories that can be benchmarked and replicated at scale.”

— National Water Research Center & AquaKraft (Q23)

On sharing the real challenges

“Sharing of genuine challenges, and the opportunity to contribute to solving them.”

— Digital Path (Q23)

On investable engagement

“Participation on panels, roundtables, think tanks — developing investable projects.”

— Anonymous respondent (Q23)