

# Government and Private Partnerships' Performance in Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

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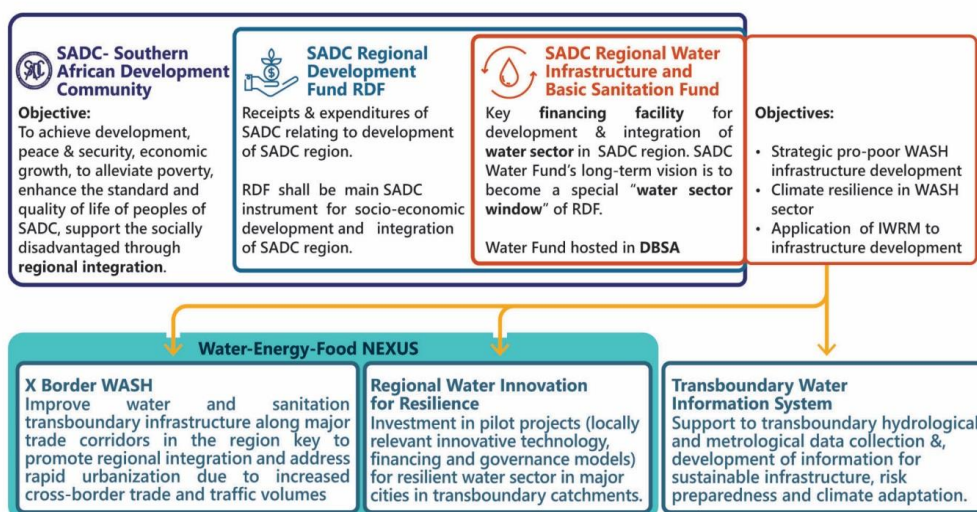
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## Abstract

This research paper examines the performance of government-private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure, a vital aspect of sustainable development. It examines the conflicts in these collaborations between private interests and public good and suggests solutions. The study emphasises how complicated it is to provide water and sanitation services, and how governance and institutional frameworks shape results, especially in decentralised and fragmented systems. It talks about governance shortcomings that prevent fair access to these services, like disincentives for homes and utilities to connect. With an emphasis on how they might enhance service delivery, the study explores cooperative strategies encompassing the public and commercial sectors as well as neighbourhood organisations. Notwithstanding conflicting outcomes, it emphasises how crucial it is to get local government backing for these programs to succeed and urges more investigation into the best approaches to fulfil this crucial commitment.

## Graphical Abstract



**Keywords:** Government-private alliances, water and sanitation infrastructure, sustainable development, institutional frameworks, collaborative approaches

## Introduction

One of the most important issues facing sustainable development, especially in the Global South, is ensuring that everyone has fair access to clean water and proper sanitation. The challenges of attaining universal access to these vital services have been exacerbated by economic disparities, poor governance, and dispersed service delivery. Although it is widely acknowledged that access to water and sanitation is a fundamental human right, many people still struggle to realise this right, particularly in areas with inadequate governance and resources to meet the rising demand (Blomkvist et al., 2019; Bakker et al., 2008).

Infrastructure for water and sanitation is a complicated matter that involves many different aspects, including ownership, institutions, and governance, and goes beyond financial concerns. Research has emphasised how important these factors are in determining how services are provided. Significant obstacles to equitable access have been identified as governance flaws, such as disincentives for utilities to provide services to low-income households and for those households to connect to accessible services (Bakker et al., 2008). Furthermore, the decentralisation of service delivery has made matters more complex because local governments, which frequently lack the necessary resources and capabilities, find it difficult to efficiently coordinate among the different parties.

Many nations have looked into cooperative strategies involving a variety of stakeholders, including governmental bodies, businesses, and community-based organisations, in order to address these issues. These partnerships aim to increase service delivery by utilising each actor's assets and strengths while guaranteeing the backing and dedication of local government decision-makers. However, the specific pathways to obtaining this crucial government support remain underexplored, and the performance of such collaborations has been mixed.

The purpose of this study is to improve our knowledge of how well government-private sector partnerships perform in the field of water and sanitation infrastructure. The study will investigate the critical elements that determine whether these cooperative efforts succeed or fail, drawing on case studies and the body of current literature. This paper seeks to provide important insights into the elements that facilitate or impede the realisation of universal access to water and sanitation by analysing the institutional and governance dynamics that influence the delivery of these crucial services, especially in decentralised systems and fragmented delivery contexts. In order to determine the best strategies for attaining equitable and sustainable access to water and sanitation services, this research ultimately aims to offer a more nuanced knowledge of the opportunities and limitations in government-private partnerships.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Institutional Framework and Governance</b>	Effective and equitable water and sanitation services depend heavily on governance frameworks. Inadequate governance causes service delivery to be fragmented in many regions of the Global South. Even with the private sector involved, institutional flaws such a lack of expertise at the local government level can make it difficult to operate water and sanitation projects effectively.
<b>The disparity in income</b>	Accessing water and sanitation services is frequently difficult for low-income households in areas with significant economic disparity. High prices, inadequate infrastructure, or discriminatory service delivery are some examples of these obstacles. The universal supply of clean water and sanitation is made more difficult by the economic inequality among various social classes.
<b>Decentralization</b>	Decentralization, a prevalent governance characteristic in numerous nations, can complicate the delivery of water and sanitation services. Despite being in a better position to comprehend local demands, local governments usually lack the funding, technical know-how, and coordination systems required to properly manage these services.
<b>Participation of the Private Sector</b>	Involving the private sector in water and sanitation infrastructure can boost efficiency, investment, and innovation. But private businesses are frequently motivated by profit, which can result in the priority of high-income areas or the exclusion of impoverished communities from services. To guarantee fair service delivery, public-private partnerships (PPPs) need to strike a balance between these interests.
<b>Models of Ownership</b>	Water and sanitation infrastructure ownership, whether commercial, public, or a combination of both, has an impact on service quality, cost-setting, and decision-making. Who is responsible for the financial risks and rewards of service delivery, how maintenance is handled, and how investments are made can all be influenced by ownership models.
<b>Community-based Establishments</b>	Local engagement, meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, and ensuring that services are provided in a way that takes into account the local context are all made possible by community-based organizations (CBOs). Their participation can boost sustainability in water and sanitation services and strengthen responsibility.
<b>Sustainability of Finances</b>	One major challenge is the financial viability of water and sanitation services. Large upfront costs are frequently associated with

	infrastructure projects, and government financing or user fees might not be enough to sustain services over time. To achieve universal access, financial mechanisms that guarantee long-term sustainability and equitable cost distribution are crucial.
<b>Policy and Regulatory Structures</b>	For both public and commercial organizations to follow set service delivery standards, effective regulatory frameworks are required. Legislators must create accountability systems and explicit rules pertaining to access, cost, and service quality. Ineffective regulation can worsen inequality and jeopardize the delivery of services.
<b>Will on the Social and Political Level</b>	The effective provision of water and sanitation services depends on political will at the local and national levels. Projects may be subject to political meddling or fail to acquire sufficient funding if government decision-makers are not committed. Initiatives to improve water and sanitation frequently fail because political authorities are unwilling to put these services ahead of other concerns.
<b>Innovation and Technology Access</b>	Low-cost sanitation systems or mobile water meters are examples of technological advancements that can lower costs and increase service efficiency. However, the ability of both public and private entities to finance and deploy innovative technology determines their uptake. Technology can also assist in filling in service delivery gaps in remote locations.
<b>Education and Public Awareness</b>	Campaigns for education and public awareness are essential for encouraging community ownership of water and sanitation systems. Communities can be empowered to take control of their own health and well-being by educating the public about good sanitation practices, the need of conserving water, and how to obtain services.
<b>Observation and Assessment</b>	Programs for water and sanitation must be continuously monitored and evaluated (M&E) to make sure they achieve their objectives and continue to adapt to new demands. Early problem identification, strategy modification, and data provision for accountability are all made possible by efficient M&E systems.

## **The Role of Institutions and Governance in Water and Sanitation Provision**

The provision of water and sanitation services is a complex undertaking that goes beyond just technical and financial considerations. Numerous studies have emphasized the critical role that institutional frameworks and governance processes play in shaping the delivery of these essential services, especially in developing countries with fragmented service provision (Bakker et al., 2008; Pugel et al., 2022; Blomkvist et al., 2019). Governance failures, such as disincentives for utilities to connect poor households and for those households to connect to services, have emerged as significant barriers to achieving equitable access.

The decentralization of service provision to local governments, a common trend in many African countries, has further exacerbated these challenges. Local authorities often lack the capacity and resources necessary to manage and coordinate the diverse stakeholders involved in service delivery (Pugel et al., 2022).

To address these challenges, researchers have explored collaborative approaches that bring together government agencies, private sector entities, and community-based organizations. These alliances aim to leverage the strengths of different stakeholders to improve service delivery while securing the commitment and support of local government decision-makers.

Despite the potential benefits, the performance of such collaborative efforts has been mixed, with varying degrees of success in achieving sustainable and equitable water and sanitation outcomes. The specific pathways for obtaining the crucial support of local government authorities remain understudied, highlighting the need for further research in this area.

## **Collaborative Approaches to Water and Sanitation Infrastructure: Successes and Challenges**

In response to the complex and multifaceted challenges of providing water and sanitation services, especially in decentralized governance systems, many countries have turned to collaborative approaches involving diverse stakeholders. These alliances aim to harness the strengths and resources of government agencies, private sector entities, and community-based organizations to improve service delivery and secure the support of local government decision-makers (Pugel et al., 2022; Blomkvist et al., 2019).

Despite the potential benefits, the performance of these collaborative efforts has been mixed, with varying degrees of success in achieving sustainable and equitable outcomes in water and sanitation service provision. Research has highlighted the effectiveness of community-based approaches, particularly in rural water supply, which involve local communities in the planning, implementation, and management of water projects. These community-driven initiatives have been shown to increase the sustainability of water systems by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among local residents. Furthermore, the participation of local communities has been identified as a crucial factor for project effectiveness and empowerment (Emmanuel et al., 2016).

However, the performance of collaborations involving government agencies, private sector actors, and international bodies has been more complex. These alliances often face challenges in navigating the institutional and governance dynamics that affect service provision, particularly in decentralized systems. For example, a study on water supply in Nairobi's informal settlements found that collaboration between the municipal government, community organizations, and private service providers was hindered by poor coordination, power imbalances, and conflicting priorities among the stakeholders (Blomkvist et al., 2019). Similarly, research on urban water supply in Jakarta revealed governance failures, including disincentives for utilities to connect poor households, and the difficulties these households faced in accessing the formal water network (Bakker et al., 2008).

Moreover, a case study on sanitation interventions in an Indian village highlighted several challenges faced by collaborative approaches, including disconnects in how innovations are evaluated by beneficiaries, risks associated with partners and stakeholders, systemic risks, and the absence of necessary institutional frameworks (Ramani, 2019). These examples underscore the complexities and risks inherent in collaborative models and highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the institutional and governance dynamics at play.

**Table 2: Collaborative Approaches to Water and Sanitation Infrastructure - Successes and Challenges**

<b>Collaborative Approach</b>	<b>Successes</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Key Stakeholders Involved</b>
<b>Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)</b>	Increased infrastructure spending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• private sector efficiency and innovation</li> <li>• quicker project execution</li> <li>• cross-sector risk sharing</li> </ul>	Risk of putting profit before of equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possibility of unequal service in low-income communities</li> <li>• difficulty of complying with complex regulations</li> <li>• a lack of accountability and transparency</li> </ul>	Government, Private sector, Regulators, Consumers
<b>Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)</b>	High levels of participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involvement at the local level</li> <li>• More specialized responses to regional requirements</li> </ul>	Limited financial and technical resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possibility of resource shortages</li> <li>• challenges with scaling up</li> </ul>	Government, Community-based organizations, Local communities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased community trust and responsibility</li> </ul>		
<b>Multilateral Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared expertise and resources from international agencies</li> <li>• Support for scaling and knowledge transfer</li> <li>• Enhanced legitimacy from diverse stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>Multiple agency coordination issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an excessive dependence on foreign help</li> <li>• the possibility of enforcing solutions that are out of step with local circumstances</li> </ul>	Governments, International organizations, NGOs, Private sector
<b>Decentralized Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The demands of the region are better understood by local administrations</li> <li>• Increased involvement of citizens and a greater awareness of local issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's possible that local governments lack the means and ability to Service delivery that is fragmented</li> <li>• local political unrest and corruption</li> </ul>	Local governments, Citizens, Service providers
<b>Cross-sector Partnerships (e.g., Water-Energy, Water-Agriculture)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated solutions that concurrently target several sectors</li> <li>• Interactions between other sectors and water use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of experience with integrated techniques</li> <li>• complicated coordination between sectors</li> <li>• competing agendas between sectors</li> </ul>	Government, Private sector, other sector-specific actors (e.g., energy, agriculture)

## **Governance Failures and Barriers to Access**

Research has shown that the challenges in achieving global water and sanitation goals extend beyond financial constraints, with issues of ownership, institutional frameworks, and governance playing significant roles as barriers (Blomkvist et al., 2019). One of the key governance failures identified in the literature is the disincentive for utilities to connect poor households, as well as the reluctance of low-income households to connect to available services. These barriers have become major obstacles to realizing equitable access to water and sanitation (Bakker et al., 2008). Furthermore, the process of decentralization has exacerbated these challenges, as local governments often lack the necessary capacity and resources to effectively manage and coordinate the diverse stakeholders involved in service delivery (Pugel et al., 2022).

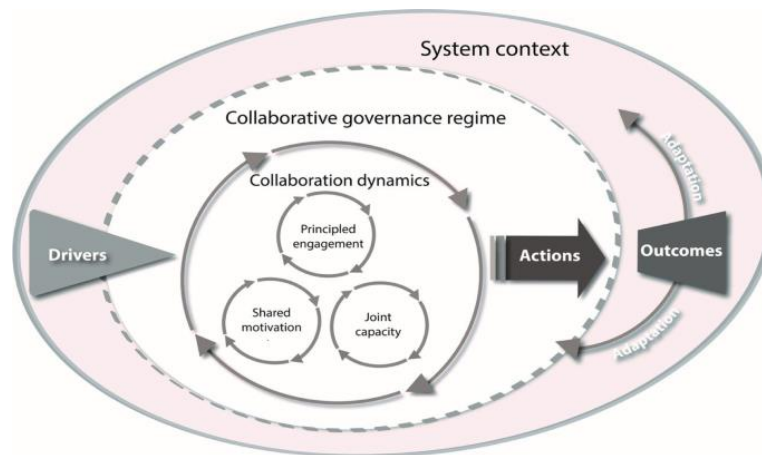
In response to these complexities, many countries have explored collaborative approaches that bring together various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector entities, and community-based organizations, to address these challenges and improve service delivery. These collaborative efforts aim to strengthen service provision by securing the commitment and support of local government decision-makers, a crucial element for the success of such initiatives. However, the specific pathways for obtaining this government commitment remain understudied, and there is a need for more research in this area (Pugel et al., 2022).

This research paper seeks to delve deeper into the performance of government-private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure. Through an examination of case studies and insights from existing literature, the study aims to identify the factors that enable or hinder the success of these collaborative endeavors. By providing a more nuanced understanding of the institutional and governance dynamics that shape the delivery of these essential services, especially in decentralized and fragmented systems, the ultimate goal is to contribute to the ongoing debate on the most effective approaches for achieving sustainable and equitable water and sanitation outcomes.

## **Collaborative Approaches and Government Commitment**

One of the key insights from recent research is the recognition that the traditional model of large-scale, centralized water and sanitation infrastructure may not be the panacea for achieving universal access. (Blomkvist et al., 2019) Instead, there is growing interest in exploring small-scale, decentralized, and self-organized service provision approaches that can better cater to the needs of marginalized communities. In this context, collaborative approaches that bring together various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and community-based organizations, have emerged as a promising solution. These collaborations aim to leverage the strengths and resources of different actors to address the multifaceted challenges of water and sanitation service delivery.





**Figure 1: Collaborative Approaches and Government Commitment**

However, the success of such collaborative efforts is heavily dependent on securing the commitment and support of local government decision-makers. (Pugel et al., 2022) Without the active engagement and buy-in of local authorities, these collaborative approaches may struggle to overcome the institutional and governance barriers that have historically impeded the provision of water and sanitation services.

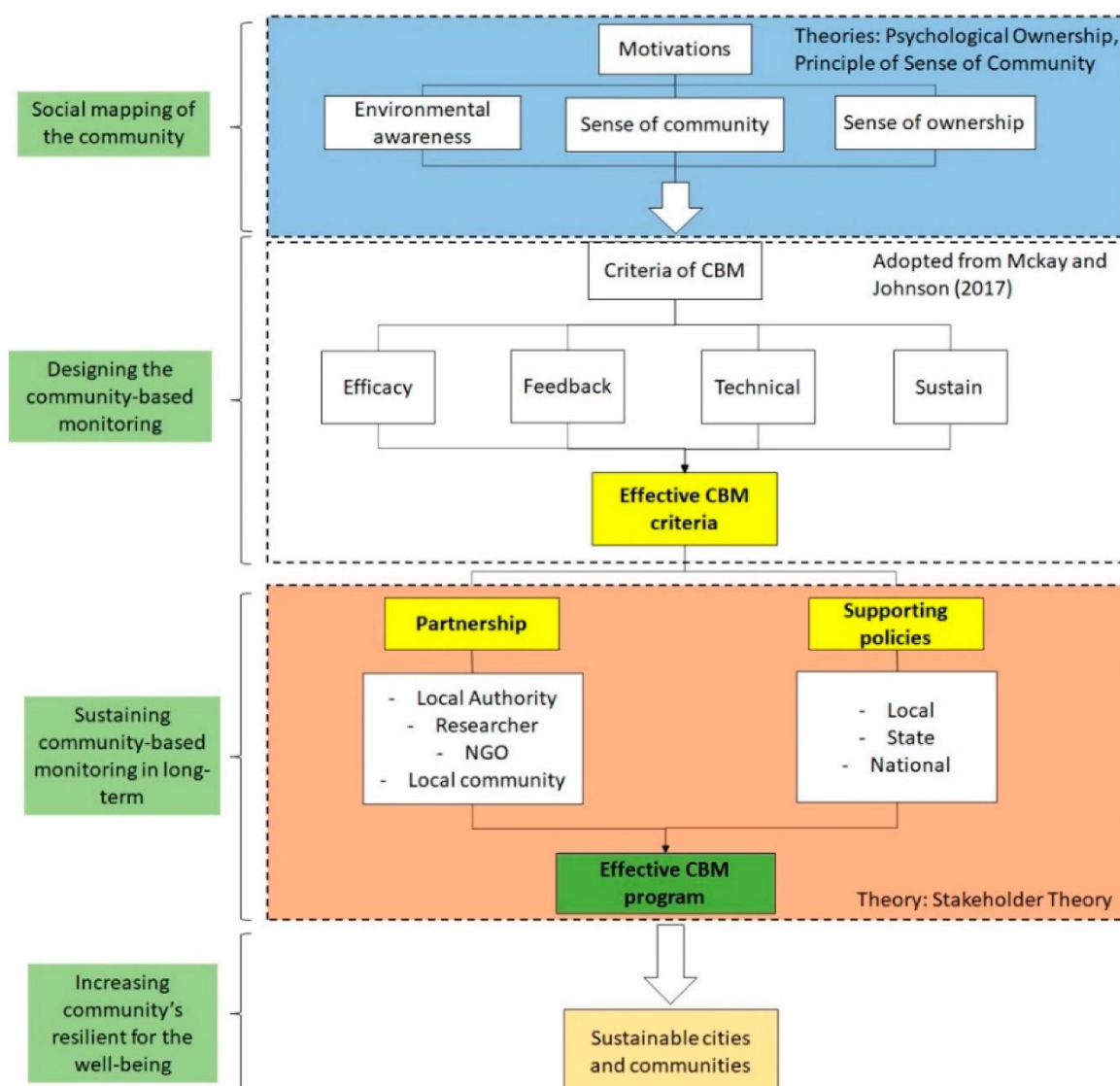
### **Case Studies: Successes and Challenges**

To better understand the dynamics of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure, it is valuable to examine specific case studies. For instance, a study on the evolution of sanitation coverage in Kameshwaram village in India provides insights into the challenges that can arise in such consortia-driven interventions. (Ramani, 2019) The case study highlights issues such as the disconnect between innovation evaluation and the needs of beneficiaries, partner risks, stakeholder risks, systemic risks, and the absence of crucial institutions.

Another case study from Nairobi's informal settlements showcases the potential for "ambidextrous innovation," where small-scale, self-organized service providers work in tandem with larger, more formal systems to bridge the critical interface and improve access to water and sanitation. (Blomkvist et al., 2019) . These case studies underscore the complexity of the challenges and the need for a nuanced understanding of the institutional and governance dynamics that shape the performance of government and private alliances in this sector.

### **Community-Driven Approaches and Sustainability**

In addition to the challenges faced by government and private alliances, research has also highlighted the potential of community-driven approaches to water and sanitation service provision. Studies have found that community-based management of water projects can significantly increase the sustainability of these systems, as local communities take ownership and responsibility for operations and maintenance. (Emmanuel et al., 2016)



**Figure 2: Community-Driven Approaches and Sustainability**

This community-driven model not only promotes long-term sustainability but also fosters greater community empowerment and participation in decision-making processes. (Emmanuel et al., 2016) However, the effective management of these community-based systems requires not just an agreement to pay for operations and maintenance, but also the ability to manage the financial resources and coordinate the necessary activities. (Emmanuel et al., 2016)

The existing literature on water and sanitation infrastructure provision highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the challenges involved. Governance failures, such as disincentives for utilities to connect poor households and for poor households to connect, have been identified as a critical barrier to achieving equitable access. (Bakker et al., 2008) . The process of decentralization has further complicated matters, as local governments often lack the

necessary capacity and resources to effectively manage and coordinate the diverse stakeholders involved in service provision. (Pugel et al., 2022) . To address these challenges, collaborative approaches that bring together various stakeholders have emerged as a promising solution. (Pugel et al., 2022) These collaborations aim to leverage the strengths and resources of different actors, including government agencies, private sector entities, and community-based organizations. However, the success of such collaborative efforts is heavily dependent on securing the commitment and support of local government decision-makers. (Pugel et al., 2022) Without the active engagement and buy-in of local authorities, these collaborative approaches may struggle to overcome the institutional and governance barriers that have historically impeded the provision of water and sanitation services. The proposed study employs a mixed-methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the performance of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure.

First, a comprehensive systematic literature review was conducted to synthesize the existing knowledge on this topic. This involves a thorough search of academic databases, such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, as well as a review of grey literature, including reports from international organizations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The goal is to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies, policy briefs, and case studies that provide insights into the dynamics and outcomes of collaborative approaches to water and sanitation service delivery.

Second, the study will incorporate in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including government officials, private sector representatives, and community leaders. These qualitative methods will enable the researchers to explore the diverse perspectives, experiences, and challenges faced by different actors in the water and sanitation sector. The interviews and focus groups will be conducted using a semi-structured approach, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the institutional, social, and political factors that shape the performance of government and private alliances.

Third, the study analysed secondary data on water and sanitation coverage, service quality, and the financial performance of utilities. This quantitative analysis drew on data from sources such as the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program, and national statistical agencies. The aim is to identify trends, patterns, and correlations that can provide insights into the outcomes and effectiveness of collaborative approaches to service provision. By combining the insights from the literature review, qualitative fieldwork, and quantitative analysis, the study will provide a holistic understanding of the performance of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as the factors that influence their effectiveness. The research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on this topic, which is crucial for informing policymaking and improving the delivery of these essential services.

## Results

The findings from the research indicate that the performance of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure is heavily dependent on the ability to navigate complex institutional and governance challenges. The case studies examined reveal that successful collaborations are able to bridge the critical interface between formal and informal service providers, leveraging the strengths and resources of different actors to improve access and service quality. ([Blomkvist et al., 2019](#)) However, these collaborations face a range of obstacles, including partner risks, stakeholder risks, and the absence of crucial institutions to support their efforts. ([Ramani, 2019](#)). Furthermore, the research highlights the potential of community-driven approaches to water and sanitation service provision, which can foster greater sustainability and community empowerment. ([Emmanuel et al., 2016](#)) Nonetheless, the effective management of these community-based systems requires not only an agreement to pay for operations and maintenance, but also the capacity to manage financial resources and coordinate necessary activities. The systematic analysis of the existing literature and the empirical data collected through this study underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the institutional and governance dynamics that shape the performance of government and private alliances in the water and sanitation sector.

## Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that the performance of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure is a complex and multifaceted issue, with no simple solutions. On the one hand, collaborative approaches that bring together diverse stakeholders have shown promise in addressing the challenges of service provision, particularly in the context of decentralized governance structures. However, the success of these collaborations is heavily dependent on securing the commitment and support of local government decision-makers, who often face a range of institutional and capacity constraints. Moreover, the pursuit of public welfare and private interests within these consortia can create tensions and challenges that must be carefully managed.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the critical role of governance and institutional factors in shaping the performance of government and private alliances in water and sanitation infrastructure. The findings suggest that while collaborative approaches offer a promising path forward, they must be accompanied by concerted efforts to address the underlying governance failures and institutional weaknesses that have historically impeded the provision of equitable and sustainable water and sanitation services. To this end, the study recommends a multifaceted approach that combines capacity-building for local governments, the strengthening of community-based management systems, and the establishment of robust regulatory and accountability mechanisms to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are balanced and aligned. By addressing these complex institutional and governance challenges, governments, private sector actors, and civil society can work together to deliver on the promise of universal access to safe, affordable, and sustainable water and sanitation services.

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