

# Engaging with the UN Water agenda

*Findings of relevance to water solution providers*

**306**

respondents

**49%**

solution providers

**~120**

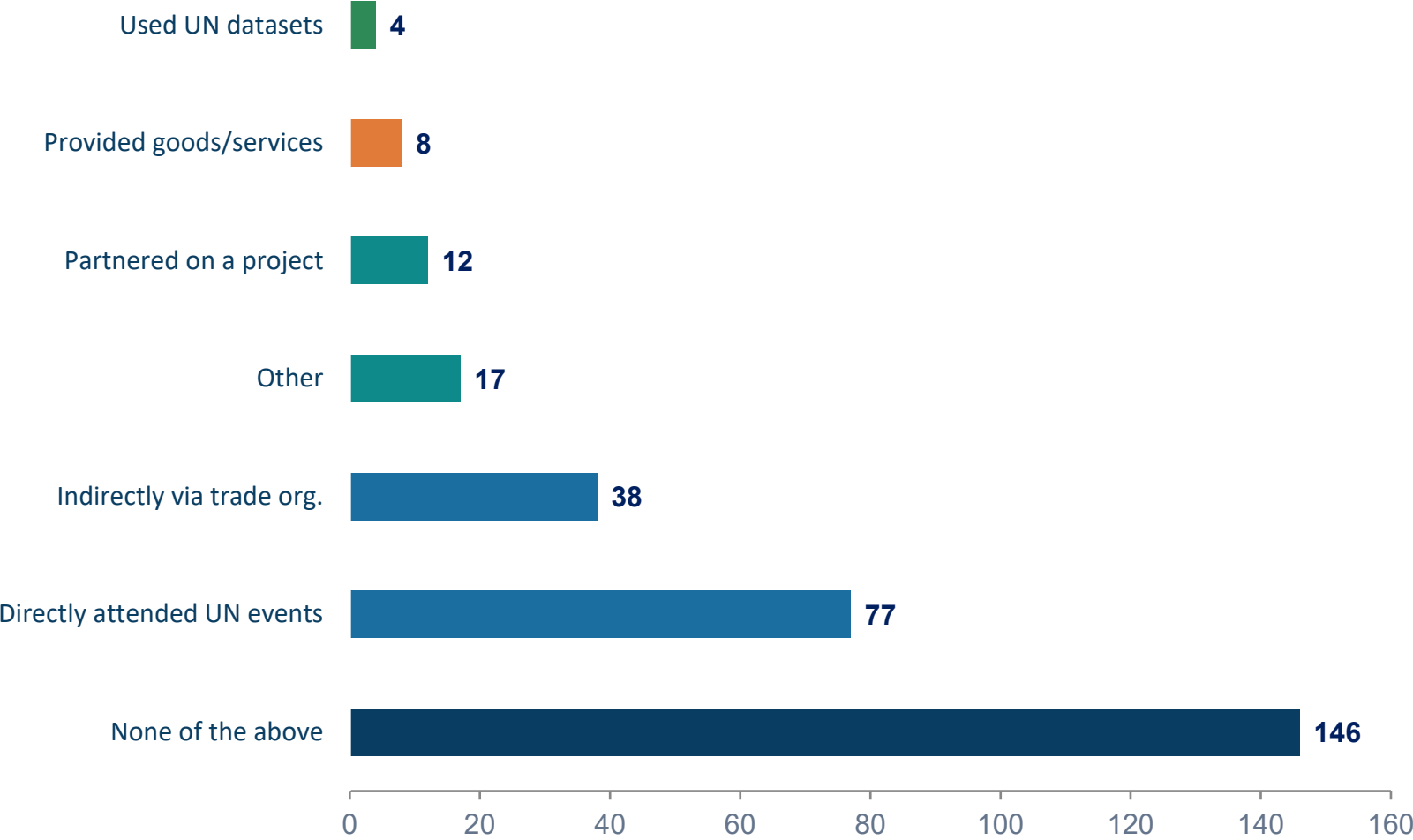
answered sector-specific Qs

**67%**

see UN role in financial structures

# Previous engagement with the UN

Prior UN engagement among all survey respondents (n = 305 respondents)



A standout response

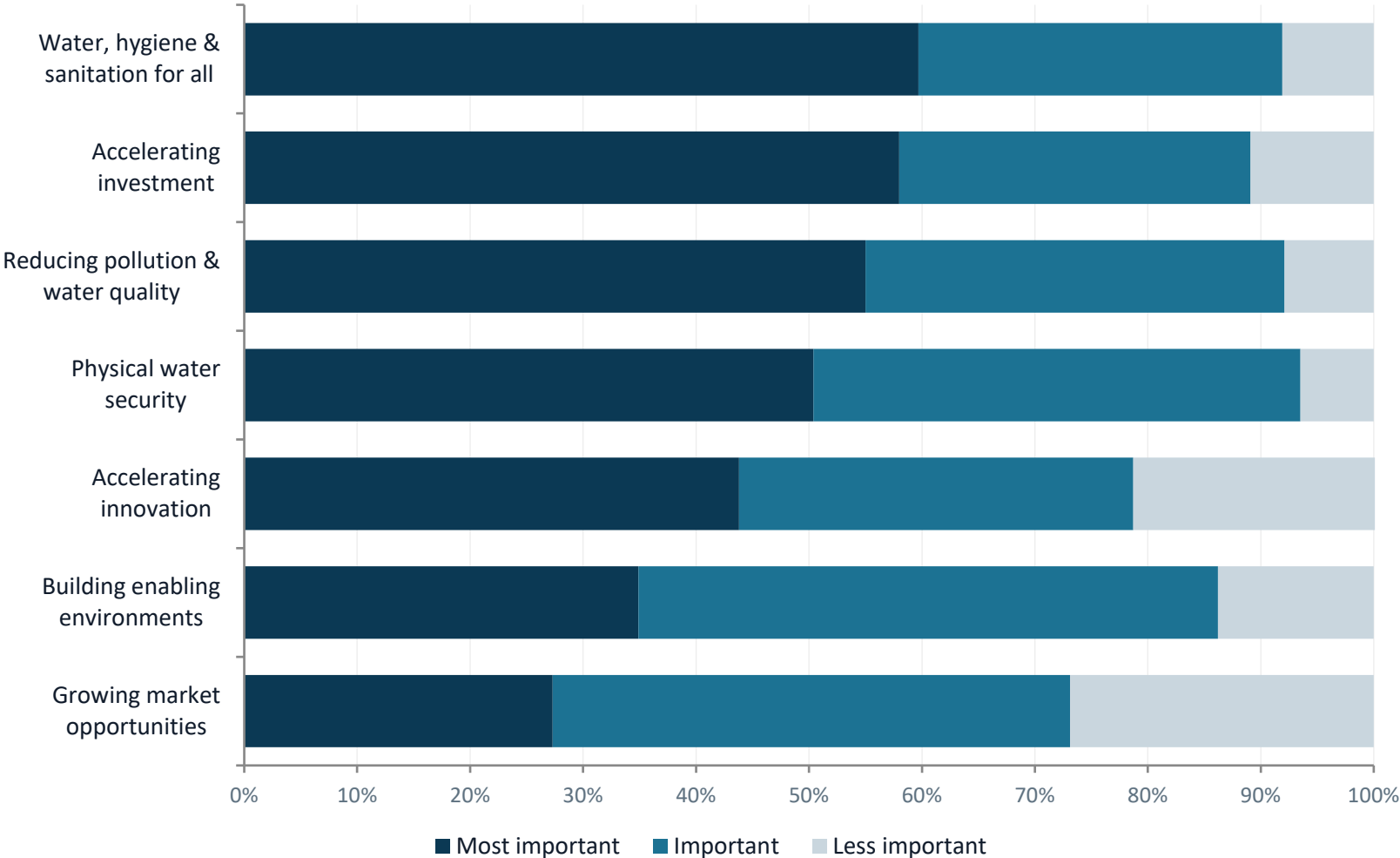
48%

have NO prior UN engagement

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# Where solution providers see urgency

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



## The signal

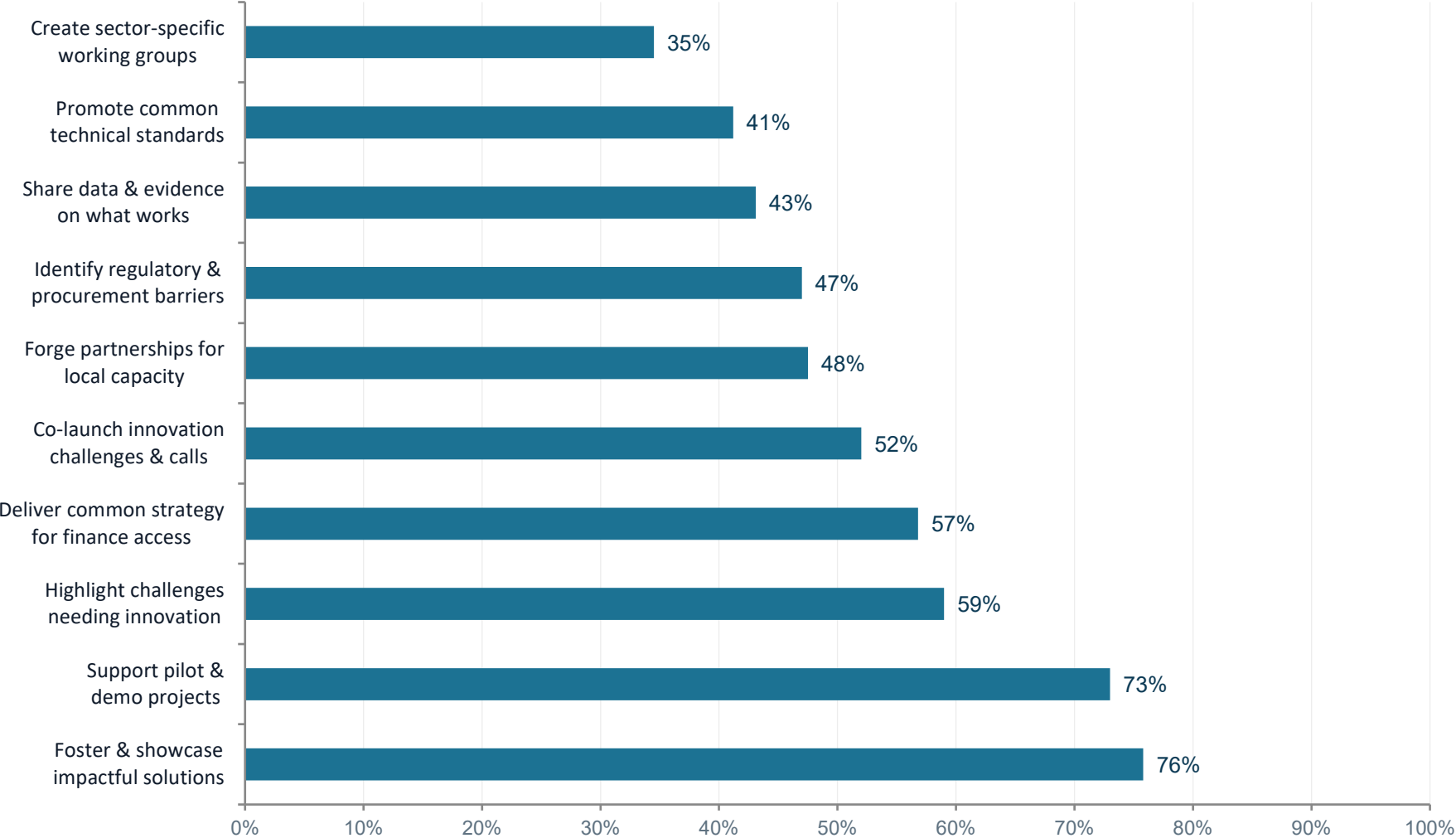
### Four challenges

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.

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*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%**

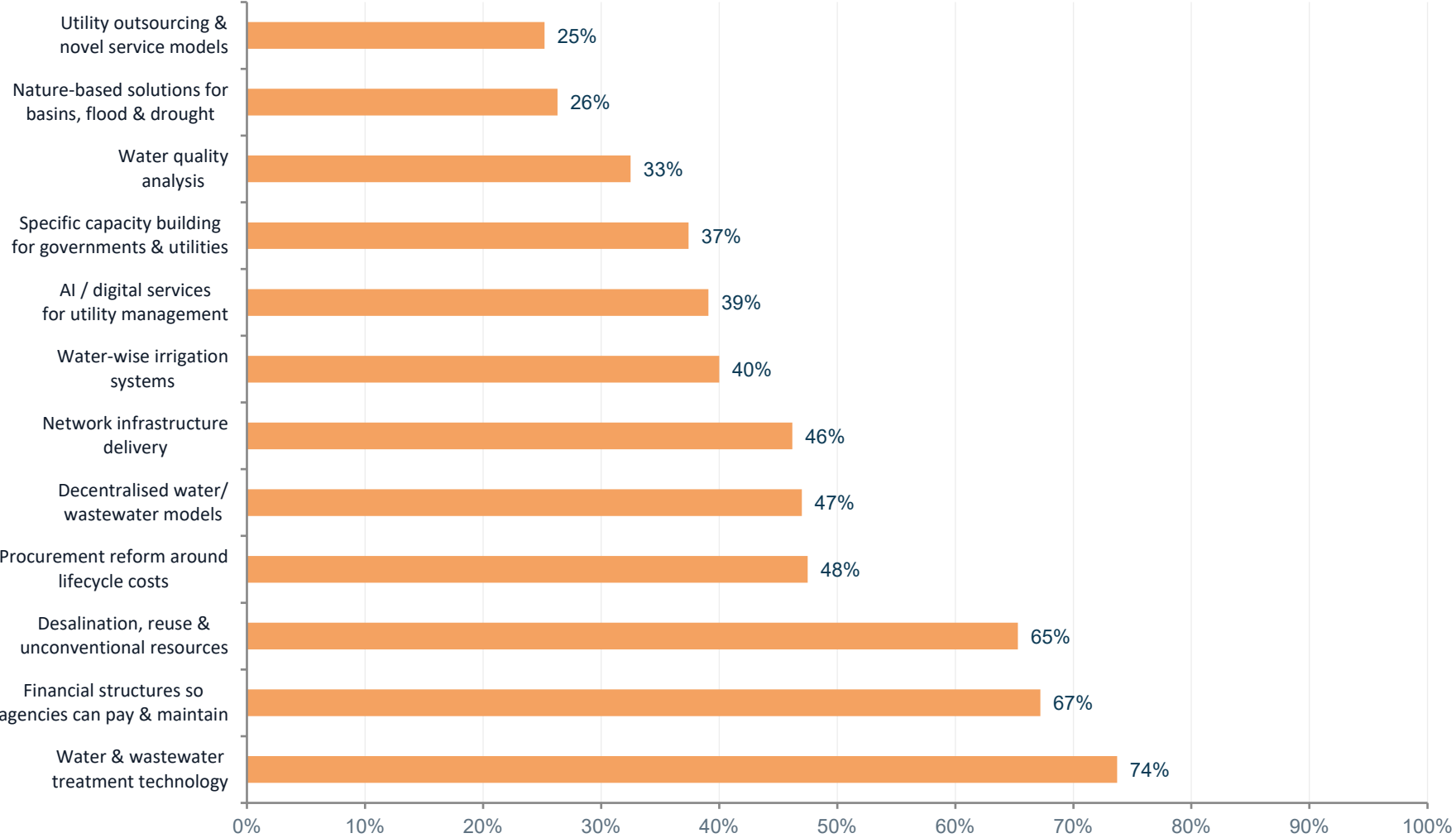
Profit margins in LMICs unattractive due to risk and unpredictability

**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.

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**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)