Mykolaiv Water Hub

Water Leaders Course

National University of Water and Environmental Engineering

Newcastle University

University of Maryland

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Module 6

Stakeholder Engagement

Mapping stakeholders · planning engagement · coordinating partners and donors

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Module Overview

Part 1

Map the system and plan engagement

Who matters? How are they affected? What level of engagement is needed?

→

Part 2

Coordinate institutions, partners and donors

How do we turn service needs into coordinated support and implementation?

Core message: engagement is not separate from utility management. It helps make better decisions, reduce risk and build trust.

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Part 1

Mapping the Utility Stakeholder System

Learning outcome: prepare a basic stakeholder map for a utility project, operational decision or crisis.



Start with a real utility decision



Scenario

A utility needs to rehabilitate a pumping station and replace a major pipeline.

- The work will improve service reliability
- It may interrupt supply and traffic
- It needs municipal and regulatory coordination
- It depends on finance, procurement and contractors
- Residents need clear, credible information

Guiding question:

Who must be informed, consulted, involved, coordinated with, and heard before, during and after the work?

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What do we mean by “stakeholder”?

A stakeholder is any person, group or institution that can affect a utility decision — or is affected by it.

Can approve or block

Municipality, regulator, ministry

Can support or fund

Donors, banks, partners

Can implement

Utility staff, contractors, suppliers

Can be affected

Households, hospitals, schools, businesses

Can shape trust

Media, civil society, community leaders

Important distinction: high influence is not the same as high impact or vulnerability.

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The water-utility stakeholder ecosystem

Inside the utility

Operations, finance, procurement, customer service, field teams, unions

Municipal / local

Mayor, council, emergency services, hospitals, schools, households, businesses, media

Utility management

National

Ministries, regulator, public health, environment, finance, procurement bodies

Critical users

Hospitals, schools, heating, emergency shelters, large employers and vulnerable customers

International

Development banks, bilateral donors, NGOs, consultants, universities, technology providers

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Map stakeholders through four lenses

Influence

Can they approve, fund, delay, block or implement?

Interest

What do they want, need, fear or expect?

Impact

How directly will they be affected by the decision?

Vulnerability

Can they participate and protect their interests?

A good map does not only ask “who is powerful?” It also asks “who carries the consequences?”

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The core tool: stakeholder register

Stakeholder	Interest / concern	Influence	Impact	Relationship	Engagement needed
Municipality	Approval, public confidence	High	High	Close	Collaborate
Hospital	Continuous safe supply	Medium	Very high	Weak/operational	Involve
Residents in work area	Outages, traffic, safety	Medium	High	Mixed	Inform + consult
Contractor	Access, schedule, payment	Medium	Medium	Formal	Coordinate
Donor / bank	Results, safeguards, reporting	High	Medium	Project-based	Collaborate

Use the register before the project starts — then update it when relationships change.

From mapping to engagement purpose

Before selecting a method, ask:

Are we informing people about an operational change?
Do we need technical knowledge before design or procurement?
Are we trying to understand concerns or objections?
Do we need cooperation from another authority?
Are we resolving conflict or negotiating trade-offs?
Are we building confidence during crisis or reconstruction?

Bad sequence

“Let’s hold a meeting.”

Good sequence

“What purpose are we trying to serve, which stakeholders need to be heard, and what method fits that?”

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Match method to stakeholder and purpose

Purpose	Useful methods	Works for
Inform	SMS, website, notices, media briefing	Customers, residents, local media
Consult	Survey, interviews, public meeting	Affected users, businesses, civil society
Involve	Working group, design workshop, liaison officer	Critical users, communities, field staff
Collaborate	Joint task force, steering group, partnership plan	Municipality, emergency services, donors
Negotiate	Structured meetings, mediation, formal agreement	Regulators, ministries, major users, contractors

Method choice should reflect literacy, access to internet, language, disability, security and urgency.

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Engagement during crisis and reconstruction



In crisis, stakeholders need:

clear information on service status and safety
what is known, unknown and being checked
expected timing and practical alternatives
consistent messages from utility and authorities
channels for urgent needs and vulnerable users
careful handling of security-sensitive details

Receive → Acknowledge → Investigate → Respond → Learn → Close

Do not over-promise. Under crisis conditions, credibility is more important than certainty.

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Part 1 exercise and take-aways

Exercise: 15 minutes

1	2	3	4
Choose one utility decision or project	List 8–12 stakeholders across levels	Score influence, impact and vulnerability	Choose one engagement action for each

Three take-aways:

1. Start with a specific utility decision, not a generic stakeholder list.
2. Map influence, interest, impact and vulnerability together.
3. Turn the map into an engagement plan with owners, timing and feedback routes.

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