



SUMMARY REPORT

Stockholm 25 August 2026
11:30 – 15:30

Convenors: WWF

Organisers: Alexis Morgan (WWF), Rylan Dobson (WWF)

Facilitators:

- Rylan Dobson (WWF)
- Alexis Morgan (WWF)
- Michael Alexander (Diageo)
- Naabia Ofosu-Amaah (TNC)
- Colin Herron (Independent Consultant)
- Scott McCready (AWS)
- Jairo Trad (Kilimo)
- Kate Holme (WaterAid)
- Laura Ziemelis (LimnoTech)
- Miriam Denis Le Seve (CDP)

Report compiled by: Alexis Morgan (WWF), Rylan Dobson (WWF)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 25th, roughly 44 people from over 30 organisations came together in Stockholm. Below is a list of the organisations that were represented at the event:

Agua segura	Freelance consultant
Alliance for Water Stewardship	Global Water Challenge (GWC)
Arable	Kilimo
Beale Infrastructure	LeafTurtle
Blue Risk Intel	LimnoTech
Cargill	Nature's Pride
CDP	Nestle Waters & Premium Beverages
Ceres	Pacific Institute
CI	RJSAX LLC
Cummins	The Nature Conservancy
Diageo	TNC
FieldFactors	Water For People
FluxGen	Water Witness International
Forest Trends	WaterAid
Frank Water	WWF

This multistakeholder group spent time exploring the question “Why do people stay” as it relates to collective action. Specifically, the discussions focused on two topics:

1. What creates lasting value for participants of collective action?
2. How do we intentionally design for participation?

The group met around 6 tables for these discussions. During the day, there were also two shorter Provocations for the attendees to explore – these were intended to be warm-ups to the dialogues and an opportunity to hear personal reflections from some of the attendees. Facilitators at each table guided reflections over the two discussions and captured input into Google Docs, which were then synthesized with ChatGPT into this WaterLogue output.

WaterLogues is an evolving, unfunded initiative, and these insights are intended to provide space for the community to advance certain actions that help to solve water challenges.

Key conclusions:

This WaterLogues explored a deceptively simple question:

“Why do people stay engaged in collective action?”

Attendees considered what sustains motivation once initial enthusiasm fades and how collective action can be intentionally designed to remain valuable as people, priorities and circumstances change. A consistent message emerged: funding, governance and technical design matter, but enduring collective action also depends on the human experience of participating - trust, relationships, shared purpose, meaningful contribution and visible progress.

Dialogue 1 – What creates lasting value for participants?

Attendees emphasised that strong human relationships and trust are often what sustain involvement through the slow and sometimes frustrating realities of collective action. Clear shared purpose, evidence of progress, opportunities to contribute meaningfully and personal connection to the issue all reinforce participation, while people are more likely to disengage when they feel unheard or unable to influence decisions.

Dialogue 2 – How do we intentionally design for participation?

The second dialogue translated these experiences into design considerations. Attendees called for collective action that is adaptable rather than rigid; invests deliberately in relationships; accommodates different ways of participating; distributes ownership beyond individual champions; maintains a compelling shared direction while celebrating incremental progress; and provides the practical foundations - including facilitation, communication, accessibility and knowledge management - that enable sustained participation.

Together, the discussions suggest a shift in emphasis: **design collective action not only for what it needs to deliver, but for what will make participation continue to feel worthwhile**. This means understanding what different attendees value, deliberately creating opportunities to build trust, providing flexible entry points and roles, making progress visible, planning for people and priorities to change, and combining clear structures with the ability to learn and adapt.

The closing survey reinforced these findings. Of 35 respondents, **75% reported gaining new perspectives or experiencing a deeper shift in their thinking**, while a further 20% said the dialogue reinforced their existing understanding. Most notably, the most frequently selected next step was to **continue a conversation with someone met during the event (38%)**, followed by discussing the ideas with colleagues or partners (25%) - reflecting the importance of relationships and continued dialogue that emerged throughout the WaterLogues.

**** This WaterLogues event was made possible by the generous support from
Fair Water Footprint and Global Water Challenge ****

SYNTHESIS OF DIALOGUES

DIALOGUE 1: What creates lasting value for participants?

This synthesis captures key insights from discussions at all the tables.

The purpose of this session was to explore the central question of the day from the perspective of attendees' lived experiences. Rather than examining organisations, governance structures or funding models, the conversation focused on what makes people choose to remain engaged in collective action over time.

Attendees were asked to share experiences across different collaborations and explore the relationships, experiences and qualities that created lasting value and sustain participation. The insights generated during this dialogue provided the foundation for the afternoon, where attention shifted from understanding these experiences to considering how they might be intentionally designed into future collective action initiatives.

Attendees were asked to reflect on the question:

What creates lasting value for people participating in collective action, and why do some collaborations become places people want to stay?

Below is a summary of the key insights that came from each of these discussion groups:

Summary

Attendees consistently described sustained engagement in collective action as depending on a combination of human relationships, shared purpose and evidence that participation is making a difference. Trust takes time to build, and progress is often much slower than expected, making patience, compromise and realistic expectations important. People remain engaged when they feel heard, respected and able to contribute value, while clear vision, achievable milestones and visible progress help maintain momentum. Personal connection to the issue, place or people affected was also a recurring source of motivation.

Key Insights

Relationships and trust sustain participation

A broad recurring theme was that collective action is ultimately undertaken by people, and strong human relationships can determine whether they remain involved when progress is slow or frustrating. Participants highlighted trust, honesty, humility, camaraderie and feeling heard and respected. In-person interaction and consistency in seeing familiar people were seen as particularly valuable for building these relationships.

Shared purpose needs to remain visible

Across several tables, attendees stressed the importance of a clear, shared vision and understanding of why people are participating. Collective action can become draining when progress is slow or priorities compete. Regularly reconnecting people to the shared purpose, while communicating both the “big picture” and relevant detail, was seen as important for maintaining engagement.

Visible progress matters, even when change takes time

Attendees repeatedly acknowledged that collective action can take significantly longer than expected. Interim milestones, tangible outputs and celebrating “little wins” can sustain momentum before environmental or financial outcomes become visible. Attendees also valued monitoring that demonstrates whether action is genuinely creating impact, while recognising that setbacks can provide useful learning.

Participation needs to feel worthwhile

People described remaining engaged when they understood what they were contributing and receiving in return, including impact, learning, personal growth, social connection and the amplification possible through working collectively. Attendees also highlighted the importance of different ways to participate, allowing people to lead, follow or contribute at different levels as their capacity changes.

Personal connection and purpose are powerful motivators

Attendees spoke about personal commitment to places, communities and the wider purpose of the work. Motivations included making change possible, contributing to something that supports humanity and being a role model for children. Excitement, belief in collective action and enjoying the work were also identified as reasons people continue despite frustration.

Inclusive participation affects whether people stay

Attendees noted that disengagement can occur when people do not feel heard or able to influence decisions. Bringing local and marginalised voices into decision-making was considered important, while attendees acknowledged practical barriers including time, transportation, compensation and power dynamics that can prevent meaningful participation.

DIALOGUE 2: How do we intentionally design for participation?

This synthesis captures key insights and recommendations from the discussions.

The purpose of this session was to build on the morning's reflections and shift from understanding what sustains participation in collective action to explore how those qualities can be intentionally designed into future initiatives. Attendees were invited to consider how governance, leadership, relationships, learning, funding and ways of working can create the conditions that encourage people to remain engaged over time.

Rather than developing detailed recommendations, the conversation explored the principles and design choices that can help collective action move beyond launching successful initiatives towards sustaining enduring participation.

Attendees were asked to reflect on the question:

How might we intentionally design collective action so that people continue to choose to stay involved over the long term?

Summary

Attendees emphasised that collective action should be **designed as an adaptive, relationship-based process rather than a fixed project structure**. Strong foundations included shared vision, transparency, trust, clear roles and local ownership, alongside realistic expectations about the time required to build relationships and deliver change. Attendees repeatedly argued for flexibility as people, circumstances and priorities change, while maintaining a clear shared direction. Designing for sustained participation also requires attention to accessibility, power, communication, learning and the practical operational foundations that enable people to participate.

Key Insights

Design for change, not permanence

A broad recurring theme was that collective action needs to evolve as attendees, circumstances and assumptions change. Attendees described continual co-design, reflection and adaptation as important, while retaining a shared “north star”. Reliance on individual champions was considered a vulnerability, particularly when people or organisational leadership change.

Relationships and trust need to be designed for

Attendees repeatedly returned to trust and human connection as foundational rather than incidental. Time for face-to-face interaction, shared experiences and relationship-building should be recognised within the design. Neutral, skilled facilitation and the ability to navigate conflict, listen to different perspectives and manage power dynamics were also considered important.

Shared ownership alongside clear roles

Attendees emphasised collective and local ownership, with several questioning company-owned or branded approaches. Government, communities and other local actors may have important leadership roles depending on context. At the same time, attendees stressed the need for clarity about roles, responsibilities and accountability, recognising that different actors bring different strengths and cannot all contribute in the same way.

Start small while keeping the bigger vision alive

A recurring theme was combining an ambitious, compelling shared vision with achievable steps and milestones. Attendees proposed testing approaches, building proof of concept and learning before expanding. Successes should be celebrated, while delays, mistakes and failures should be treated as opportunities for learning rather than automatically signalling failure.

Participation requires deliberate attention

Attendees highlighted multiple entry points, accessible logistics, language, timing and different forms of contribution as design considerations. Meaningful participation cannot be assumed simply because a platform exists. Several tables stressed engaging communities and underrepresented groups early, recognising differing organisational objectives and creating space for attendees to express what they need and value.

Practical foundations matter

Attendees cautioned against allowing an ambitious vision to obscure operational realities. Funding, coordination, knowledge management, monitoring, maintenance, communication and capacity-building were described as foundational. Clear metrics and regular review can maintain accountability, but attendees also cautioned against focusing narrowly on volumes or metrics at the expense of broader impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Practical applications

Across the dialogues, a consistent message emerged: sustaining collective action requires more than securing initial commitment. People's motivations, capacity and expectations change over time, particularly when progress is slow, organisational priorities shift or individuals move on. Collective action therefore needs to be designed not only around the outcomes it seeks to achieve, but around the experience and value of participating in it.

The discussions point to a set of practical considerations for designing collective action that people and organisations continue to see value in being part of.

Start with a compelling shared purpose – but understand what different participants value

A common vision provides direction, but attendees should not be assumed to share the same motivations. Create space early on to understand what different attendees care about, what they can contribute and what they need to gain from participating. Translate the shared purpose into language and measures that are meaningful to different actors, and regularly reconnect participants to why they came together.

Design relationships and trust into the process

Trust should not be treated as something that will emerge automatically. Allow sufficient time for relationships to develop, particularly during inception, and create opportunities for people to interact beyond formal project processes. Face-to-face engagement, shared experiences, honest conversations

and skilled, neutral facilitation can all help build the relational foundations needed to navigate disagreement, compromise and periods of slow progress.

Create different ways for people to contribute

Participation does not need to look the same for everyone or remain constant over time. Be explicit about roles and expectations while providing different entry points and levels of commitment. Design for practical barriers such as time, language, accessibility and resources, particularly where local or marginalised voices might otherwise be excluded. Allow people to lead, follow or step back at different moments without disengaging entirely.

Make progress visible – and make space for setbacks

Long-term outcomes can take years to materialise. Break ambitious goals into realistic milestones that allow participants to see progress and celebrate smaller wins along the way. At the same time, build in opportunities to reflect on delays, failed assumptions and things that have not worked. Treating adaptation and learning as part of the process can help sustain confidence when progress is not linear.

Design for people and priorities to change

Collective action should not depend excessively on individual champions. Build shared ownership, clear responsibilities, knowledge management and redundancy into key roles so that personnel changes do not undermine the initiative. Regularly revisit assumptions about who needs to participate and what they need from the collaboration, recognising that motivations, capacity and context will evolve.

Keep the structure strong enough to provide confidence, but flexible enough to evolve

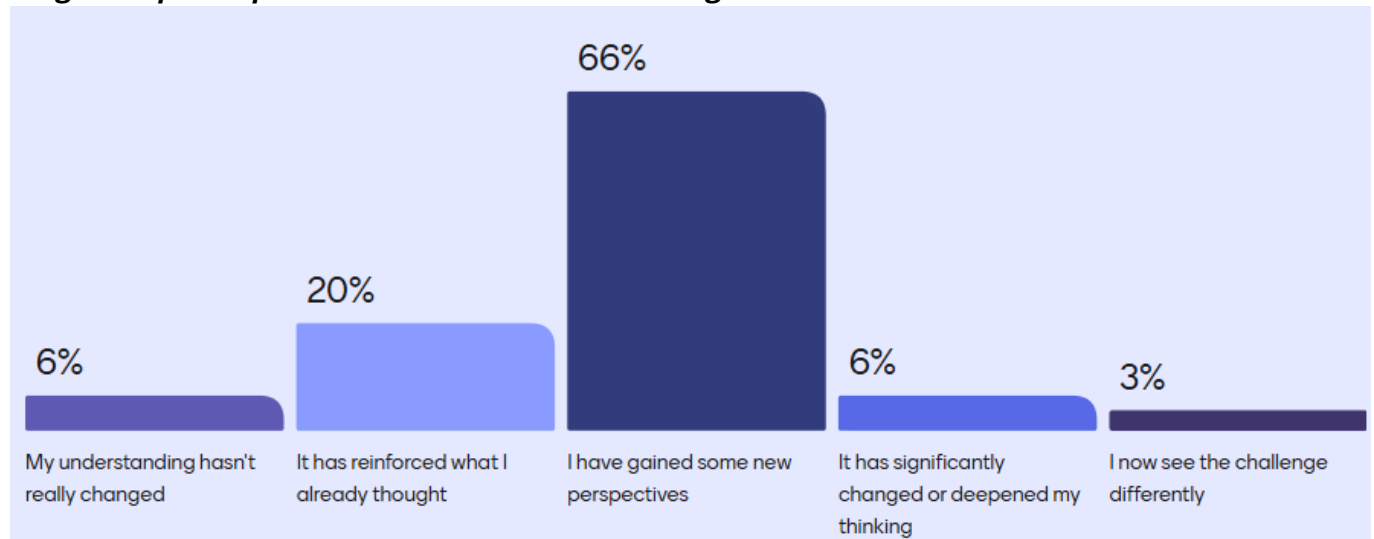
Participants repeatedly cautioned against both under-designing collective action and making it overly rigid. Establish clear expectations, decision-making processes, communication, monitoring and approaches for managing conflict, while retaining flexibility to adapt as circumstances change. The objective is not to design a perfect structure at the outset, but to create a collaboration capable of learning and redesigning itself while maintaining a clear shared direction.

Taken together, these discussions suggest a simple shift in emphasis: **design collective action not only for what it needs to deliver, but for what will make participation continue to feel worthwhile.** Funding, governance and technical design remain essential, but lasting collective action also depends on creating the conditions in which people feel connected to the purpose, able to contribute meaningfully, see progress and continue to choose to participate.

SURVEY: ATTENDEE SENTIMENTS

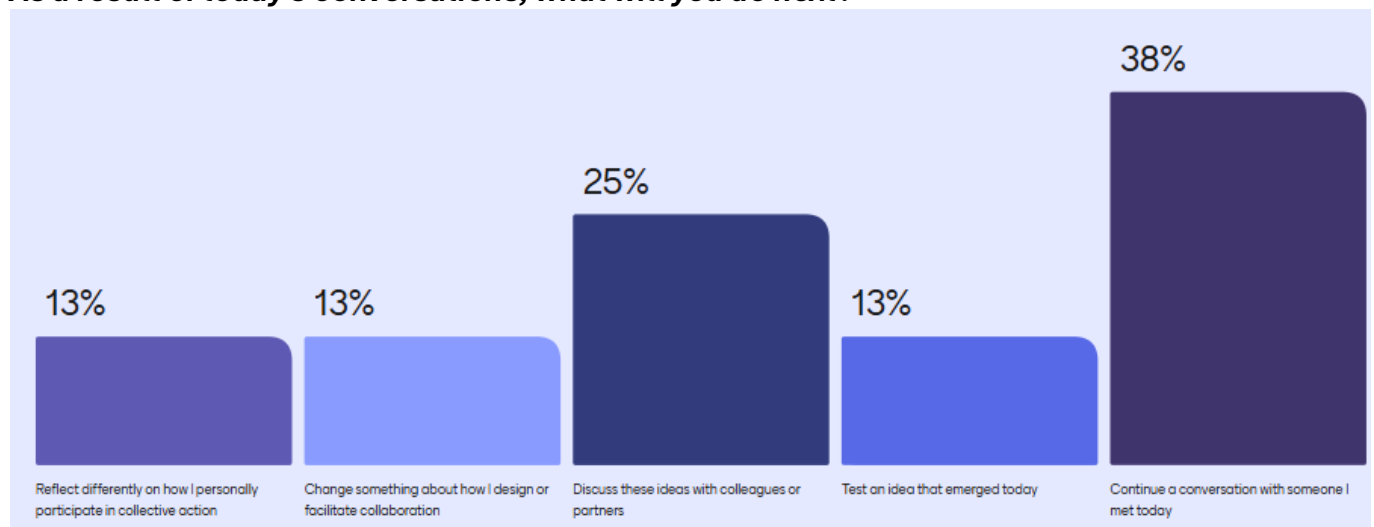
At the end of the event, attendees were asked to complete a survey and answer two questions:

Thinking back to the start of today, how has your understanding of what sustains people's long-term participation in collective action changed?



Total responses = 35

As a result of today's conversations, what will you do next?



Total responses = 35

The closing survey suggests that the event succeeded in broadening participants' perspectives on what sustains long-term participation in collective action. Of 35 respondents, 75% reported gaining new perspectives or experiencing a deeper shift in their thinking, while a further 20% said the discussions reinforced their existing understanding. Only 6% indicated that their understanding had not really changed.

Participants also identified ways they intended to carry the conversation forward. Most notably, continuing a conversation with someone they met during the event was the most frequently selected next step (38%), followed by discussing the ideas with colleagues or partners (25%). Others intended

to reflect differently on their own participation, change aspects of how they design or facilitate collaboration, or test an idea emerging from the discussions (13% each).

The responses reinforce an important theme from the dialogues themselves: the value created was not only in generating new ideas, but also in creating relationships and conversations that attendees wanted to continue beyond the event.

APPENDIX: DATA PROMPTING

Below is a copy of the primary prompt that was used to process all the raw data that was collected in the Google Doc sheets.

You are acting as the official rapporteur for the WaterLogues event.

Your role is to faithfully capture the discussion exactly as participants expressed it.

*You are **not** acting as a consultant, advisor or strategist.*

Do not improve participant ideas.

Do not infer conclusions that participants did not reach.

Do not generate recommendations that were not clearly expressed.

Your responsibility is to organise the discussion into a concise report that participants themselves would recognise as an accurate reflection of what was said.

STEP 1 – REMOVE FACILITATOR CONTENT

The raw notes contain both facilitator guidance and participant discussion.

Before beginning your analysis, compare the notes against the facilitator guide and agenda previously provided.

The facilitator guide contains:

- discussion questions
- facilitator prompts
- suggested outputs
- headings
- explanatory text

*These are **NOT** participant contributions.*

Many facilitators copied these directly into the Google Docs before recording the discussion.

Completely ignore this text.

Treat it as though it does not exist.

Only analyse the words, ideas, examples and recommendations contributed by participants.

If there is any uncertainty whether text originated from the facilitator guide or participants, assume it is facilitator text unless participant discussion clearly expands upon it.

ANALYSIS PRINCIPLES

Your synthesis should be driven entirely by the evidence in the discussion.

When analysing the notes:

- Give greater weight to ideas that emerged independently across multiple tables.
- Merge similar ideas where appropriate but preserve the original intent and language.
- Preserve concrete examples, specific mechanisms and practical ideas.
- Avoid replacing participant language with generic consultant language.
- Do not over-generalise.
- Do not fill gaps in the discussion.
- If participants did not reach a conclusion, say so.
- If participants did not make recommendations, do not create them.

Imagine participants are reading the report afterwards. They should recognise their own discussion.

OUTPUT FORMAT

The output should be formatted exactly as though it were being inserted directly into a Microsoft Word report.

Use:

- Bold headings
- Bold sub-headings
- Normal paragraphs
- Simple bullet points
- A blank line between each major section

Do not use:

- Markdown symbols
- Tables
- Numbered lists
- Nested bullets

The formatting should require little or no editing after copying into Microsoft Word. The completed section should fit comfortably within approximately half a page.

Summary

Write one short paragraph (maximum 100 words).

Capture the overall direction of the discussion.

Focus on what participants collectively believed was most important.

Do not describe the discussion process.

Key Insights

Include only the strongest insights that genuinely emerged.

*There is **NO required number**.*

If only two important insights emerged, present two.

If five genuinely important insights emerged, present five.

For each insight use:

Insight title

One short paragraph explaining the insight.

Where helpful, indicate whether the insight reflected:

- *Broad consensus*
- *Recurring theme*
- *Emerging idea*
- *Minority perspective*

Only use these descriptors where they genuinely help explain the discussion.

Divergent Views

*Include this section **ONLY** if meaningful differences of opinion clearly emerged. Do not include it simply because different examples were mentioned. If participants broadly agreed, omit this section entirely.*

FINAL QUALITY CHECK

Before producing the final response ask yourself:

- *Have I accidentally analysed facilitator prompts?*
- *Have I replaced participant language with my own?*
- *Have I invented recommendations?*
- *Have I created divergence where none existed?*
- *Have I over-generalised specific examples*

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, revise the synthesis before presenting it. The final report should read like the authentic collective voice of participants, organised clearly and concisely by an experienced conference rapporteur.