

Introductory note for 9th World Water Forum Action Group 4B: Implement the principles of good water governance, including participatory decision-making (6.5, 6.B, 16.7, 5.5, 17.18)

Background

Often, water crises are governance crises. Proper water quality, prevention and responses to water-related disasters, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, require not only the existence of technical solutions, but also enabling conditions to put them in place. Water crises can have devastating effects on food security, poverty alleviation, economic development and social stability. Decision-makers have to make tough choices about how to manage water for inclusive economic growth and environmental stability. Better stakeholder engagement both within and outside the water sector can help ensure that these choices are the right ones and are implemented effectively. Good water governance requires a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes while fostering constructive state-society relations.

In 2015, as a result of a bottom up consultation process started since the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille (2012), the [OECD Water Governance Initiative](#) developed 12 must-do for governments and stakeholders willing to improve their water governance systems: the 12 [OECD Principles on Water Governance \(Annex\)](#). In sum, the Principles argue that public policy responses will only be viable if they are consistent, if stakeholders are properly engaged, if well-designed regulatory frameworks are in place, if information is adequate and accessible, and if there is sufficient capacity, integrity and transparency. The [OECD indicator framework on water governance and an online map with 50+ evolving practices](#) help government and stakeholders assess their water governance systems and get inspired by a wide range of examples and experiences.

Identifying the gaps

Participatory decision-making has been identified as one of the targets of the SDG 6 (6.5, 6.B). However at least three main obstacles can be observed:

- **Institutional fragmentation:** A major governance gap often pointed out in the water sector is the high degree of fragmentation of players and decision makers with frequently unclear and overlapping roles and responsibilities. The type of actors contributing to decision-making and implementation processes varies largely across water governance functions from policy-making to regulation, service delivery, water resources management and financing. Cities are closer to citizens, but often lack capacity and financial resources to properly engage stakeholders, which can result in weak or absent participatory processes. The water cycle (from surface runoff, infiltration, evaporation, condensation and crystallisation) is often not fully incorporated in national and subnational and municipal governmental functions and faculties, and, as a result, inter-sectoral interaction, synergies and public-sector accountability for water is limited..
- **Unheard voices:** Strong monopolies, and at times oligopolistic markets, have characterised the water sector and decision-making processes can often be in the hands of a closed group of stakeholders, in addition to governments. Some categories of stakeholders are often omitted and remain unheard. These include women (as the primary users of water in many parts of the world for domestic consumption, subsistence agriculture and health), youth (as the future generation that will need to solve issues related to water), the rural and urban poor (as the main consumers in informal urban and rural settlements) and indigenous and aboriginal communities. Institutional analysis considers that local knowledge provided by engagement at the community-level can lead to better-informed institutional design and economic solutions to solve community problems. The

provision of water and sanitation services without including youth and women will consolidate the unequal balance of power and in decision-making processes. In many cases, intergenerational interaction is needed to preserve traditional knowledge related to water use and conservation. It is important that communities engage in water conservation and protection, as well as in land management that protects water sources.

- **Measuring the impact of good governance principles.** Water governance is a means to an end, contributing to better water quality, quantity and disaster management. Understanding the impacts of governance is key to improve policies and achieve goals, including the SDG6 on water. From a methodological point of view, one of the issues consists in showing the causal link between input (policies) and outputs in terms of quality, quantity and risk management. The OECD Water Governance Programme has started a work to taking stock of the measurement frameworks on water governance impacts. Ultimately, water governance is “good” if it can help to solve key water challenges. It is “bad” if it generates undue transaction costs and does not respond to place-based needs. This is why water governance is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Proposals for Actions

The main objective of the Action Group is the promotion of the implementation of good water governance principles, including participatory decision-making. In continuation with the work that started with the previous forum in Brasilia, the Action Group will work to consolidate what good governance is and how it can be implemented, in light of the global developments that have occurred between then and the Dakar Forum. It will also work towards the dissemination of the results of this work. The actions will contribute to these aims by promoting greater participatory engagement from stakeholders in the proposed actions and championing inclusivity and diversity.

In order to bridge the above identified gaps, three actions are proposed by the Action Group 4.b:

- **Develop evidence on the impact of good governance on people’s well-being and water resources and services management.**

This activity aims to analyse how the impacts of different dimensions of governance can be measured against the OECD Water Governance Principles in order to improve policies and achieve goals, including the SDG6 on water. The objective is to understand the extent to which good governance (as a means) contributes to good outcomes for people (as an end) in terms of access to quality water services, water quality, quantity, water security, etc. By governance, we mean the building blocks of the OECD principles on water governance.

Steps and tasks:

- Carrying out a literature review on the impacts of water governance on water management (OECD lead)
- Learning from the experience of identified countries/ river basin organisations, water experts, regulators in measuring how decisions taken on a range of water governance dimensions impact water management (e.g. water quality, quantity), as well as environment, health and economy.
- Benchmarking of good governance to measure the impact/ success/ rate of a country based on the challenge of benchmarking/ supported by the youth

Expected outputs:

- White paper on measuring impacts of water governance

Ways forward beyond the forum:

- Water Governance Outlook report, including evaluation and lessons learnt at global level
- **Involve local authorities to improve multi-level water governance. This can take the form of engagement platforms with Mayors, city managers, river basin organisations or other local constituencies. It is proposed, amongst others, to set up a Roundtable of Mayors on Water Security in Africa to be launched in Dakar.**

Engaging local authorities on water governance can help: upgrade skills with regard to the water and sanitation sector, especially at technical level, make sure the decision making process is participative, including women, young people and the poorest, and transparent and that the legal system of each country provides for prompt and effective procedures and bodies for monitoring and control, to guarantee access and right to water and sanitation. Mayor, in particular can help raise the profile of water in the local and regional policy making, secure the political leadership to make water security a priority, enhance a holistically local planning and economic development vision based on water quality and quantity, ensure urban development is consistent with natural resources challenges.

Since the 9th World Water Forum is hosted in Africa, a regional Roundtable of Mayors from African cities could contribute to support the role of cities in enhancing water security and providing better access to water and sanitation, within a multilevel approach. Coping with water security at local level is extremely important due to the proximity of cities to available water resources, and their competencies in management and distribution, as well as their acute vulnerability to water risks. A successful recipe for better water governance in cities is based on effective coordination between policies, people and places, in order to foster complementarities across sectors, improve inclusive decision-making and foster cooperation. The Roundtable would aim to foster a dialogue across mayors, local executives, leaders of rural communities and basin organisations, as well as representatives from regional councils, or other equivalent bodies, according to territorial organisation.

Steps and tasks:

- Mobilisation of local authorities in Africa, responsible for the implementation of water policies.
- Identification of thematic items for dialogue, based on the results of the OECD report on Water Security in African Cities and focusing, for example, on issues related to managing water at the appropriate scale within basin systems, addressing policy fragmentation, fostering coordination and coherence across scales and sectors, allocating sufficient financial resources, ensuring sound regulatory frameworks and mainstreaming integrity and transparency in the water sector, and if and how these governance goals are achieved through participatory decision-making and stakeholder engagement.
- Identification of basin associations or basins management actors, rural communities, regional councils, according to the organisation of each country whose activities are linked to municipal water management.

Expected outputs:

- Roundtable of Mayors from African cities
- **Engage with unheard voices in water decision-making processes, such as women, indigenous communities and youth, to explore how to make them contribute to the decision-making.** It will be done through a series of **testimonials of voices on water**. Often various categories of stakeholders remain unheard when it comes to policy making. Instead,

according to cultural and social circumstances, which vary across countries and regions, they can contribute to effective decision-making and implementation. Understanding these factors is key to enable adaptability of effective, efficient and inclusive water governance. The testimonials will showcase women, indigenous communities and youth organisations, with a particular focus on connecting school-age youth parliamentarians to decision-making processes.

Steps and tasks:

- Involvement of grassroots NGO's who have built and established relationships with targeted stakeholder groups as intermediaries in order to gather true testimony of "unheard voices".
- Identification of youths, women and/or indigenous communities who are innovating in water management and not involved in decision-making.
- Preparation of a dedicated session in the "fish bowl meeting" form, to ensure that everyone in the room has the same right to speak and is considered at the same rank. The session could be considered as the culminating point of a wide process of talks before and during the forum.
- Implementation of a dedicated social media campaign, if financial resources are available.

Expected outputs:

- Collection of testimonies, through videos, articles and pictures

Annex A. The OECD Principles on Water Governance and their implementation strategy

The OECD Principles on Water Governance

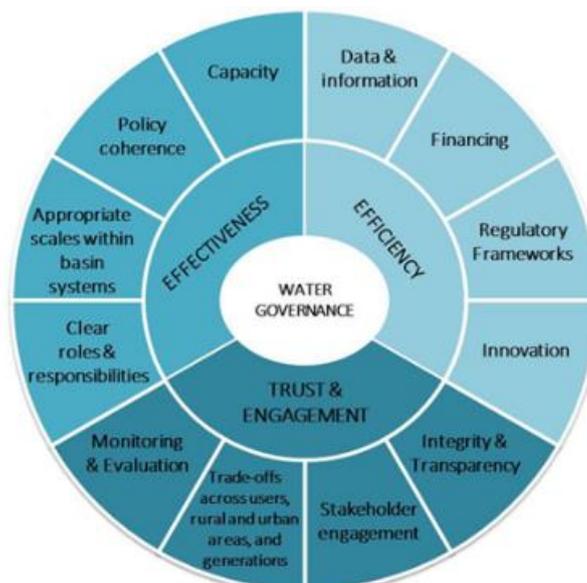
The OECD Principles on Water Governance intend to contribute to tangible and outcome-oriented public policies, based on three mutually reinforcing and complementary dimensions of water governance (Figure 1):

- *Effectiveness* relates to the contribution of governance to define clear sustainable water policy goals and targets at all levels of government, to implement those policy goals, and to meet expected targets.
- *Efficiency* relates to the contribution of governance to maximise the benefits of sustainable water management and welfare at the least cost to society.
- *Trust and Engagement* relate to the contribution of governance to building public confidence and ensuring inclusiveness of stakeholders through democratic legitimacy and fairness for society at large.

The Principles recognise that governance is contextual. They acknowledge that water policies need to be adapted to different water resources situations and places, and that responses should adapt to changing circumstances. The Principles establish that coping with current and future challenges requires robust public policies, targeting measurable objectives according to predetermined time schedules at the appropriate scale, relying on a clear assignment of duties across the authorities responsible, and performing regular monitoring and evaluation. They assert that governance can greatly contribute to the design and implementation of such policies, with the responsibility shared by different levels of government and by civil society, business and a broad range of stakeholders, as well as policy makers.

The OECD Principles on Water Governance provide a framework for understanding water governance systems, determining whether they are performing optimally, and helping to adjust them where necessary. They can catalyse efforts for making good practices more visible, learning from international experience, and putting reform processes in motion at all levels of government, to facilitate change when and where needed. They can also help avoid traps and pitfalls, learning from international experience.

Figure 1. Overview of OECD Principles on Water Governance



Source: OECD Principles on Water Governance, OECD, 2015. <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/OECD-Principles-on-Water-Governance.pdf>

The twelve Principles are the following:

- **Principle 1.** Clearly allocate and distinguish roles and responsibilities for water policy making, policy implementation, operational management and regulation, and foster co-ordination across these responsible authorities.
- **Principle 2.** Manage water at the appropriate scale(s) within integrated basin governance systems to reflect local conditions, and foster co-ordination between the different scales.
- **Principle 3.** Encourage policy coherence through effective cross-sectoral co-ordination, especially between policies for water and the environment, health, energy, agriculture, industry, spatial planning and land use.
- **Principle 4.** Adapt the level of capacity of responsible authorities to the complexity of water challenges to be met, and to the set of competencies required to carry out their duties.
- **Principle 5.** Produce, update and share timely, consistent, comparable and policy-relevant water and water-related data and information, and use it to guide, assess and improve water policy.
- **Principle 6.** Ensure that governance arrangements help mobilise water finance and allocate financial resources in an efficient, transparent and timely manner.
- **Principle 7.** Ensure that sound water management regulatory frameworks are effectively implemented and enforced in pursuit of the public interest.
- **Principle 8.** Promote the adoption and implementation of innovative water governance practices across responsible authorities, levels of government and relevant stakeholders.
- **Principle 9.** Mainstream integrity and transparency practices across water policies, water institutions and water governance frameworks for greater accountability and trust in decision making.
- **Principle 10.** Promote stakeholder engagement for informed and outcome-oriented contributions to water policy design and implementation.
- **Principle 11.** Encourage water governance frameworks that help manage trade-offs across water users, rural and urban areas, and generations.
- **Principle 12.** Promote regular monitoring and evaluation of water policy and governance where appropriate, share the results with the public and make adjustments when needed.

Implementation Strategy¹

In 2015, the OECD Principles on Water Governance emphasised that policy responses to water challenges will only be viable if they are coherent and integrated; if stakeholders are properly engaged; if well-designed regulatory frameworks are in place; if there is adequate and accessible information; and if there is sufficient capacity, integrity and transparency. While framing the key conditions for effective, efficient and inclusive water policies, the Principles provide a tool for dialogue to understand whether water governance systems are performing optimally and where change, reforms or actions are needed.

In 2018, the OECD developed a set of tools to support interested countries in self-assessing and improving the performance of their water governance system and to stimulate collective learning and peer support among governments and stakeholders around the world. These tools are the Indicator Framework and the evolving water governance practices.

¹Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance, OECD, 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/governance/implementing-the-oecd-principles-on-water-governance-9789264292659-en.htm>

Indicator Framework

The Water Governance Indicator Framework is conceived as a voluntary self-assessment tool to assess the state of play of water governance policy frameworks (what), institutions (who) and instruments (how), and their needed improvements over time. It is intended to be applicable across governance scales (local, basin, national, etc.) and water functions (water resources management, water services provisioning and water disaster risk reduction). It is grounded on a sound bottom-up and multi-stakeholder approach rather than a reporting, monitoring or benchmarking perspective, since governance responses to common water challenges are highly contextual and place-based.

Evolving water governance practices

The evolving water governance practices are meant to help policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders learn from each other and identify pitfalls to avoid when designing and implementing water policies. As such, they are a vehicle for peer-to-peer dialogue and learning. Collected amongst members of the Water Governance Initiative and the Global Coalition for Good Water Governance, the 54 practices were analysed at face value to showcase how water governance works in practice across geographical context, scales (international, national, regional, basin, local), time frames (from less than a year to more than ten years), actors involved and water functions. Three critical elements are common to the success of all these practices: stakeholder engagement, financing and political will. The practices show that improved water governance generates positive welfare effects on social and environmental well-being and sustained economic growth.

Annex B: Summary of Proposed Actions

ACTION 1: Develop evidence on the impact of good governance on people's well-being and water resources and services management									
Overall Objective: Measuring the impact of good governance principles on water management efficiency Overall purpose and expected results: Understand how the impacts of governance are measured, in order to improve policies and achieve goals, including the SDG6 on water. Expected result: White paper on measuring impacts of water governance Overall SDGs Alignment: 6.5, 6.1 Coherence with other Priorities: 1, 2									
PROJECT 1: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE									
STEPS	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE	EXPECTED RESULTS	SDGs ALIGNMENT	IMPLEMENTATION	PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVENESS	REPLICABILITY IN OTHER CONTEXTS	REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVENESS	POTENTIAL OVERLAPPING OR COHERENCE WITH OTHER AGs
Literature review	Checking existing measurement frameworks	Carrying out a literature review on the impacts of water governance on water management	Building an evidence-base through a working document	6.5 and 6.1	Desk Research		Yes		
Identification of case studies	Learning from insights from identified countries/ river basin organisations in measuring impacts on water management (e.g. water quality, quantity) as a consequence of decisions taken on a range of water		Mapping of contributions from experts from RBOs, regulatory agencies etc.	6.5 and 6.1	Interviews with water experts in various domains		Yes		

	governance dimensions.								
Session preparation	Disseminate the results and discuss the ways forward		Exchange forums on case studies (countries, basin, municipalities: baseline situation in relation to the MDGs / SDGs, gap to be filled, Benefits / advantages for countries, basins, municipalities having developed good governance practices (institutions, participatory frameworks, management rules, domestic financing methods, inclusive implementation framework, etc.)	6.5 and 6.1	Create conversation circles and opportunities for debate with ex Create conversation circles and opportunities for debate with experts	Session at the platform of mayors and other local government officials Session at the summit level of Heads of State and Government Session at the level of technical and financial partners		National level Local level Basins	

Session preparation and Roundable	Gather mayors from various African Cities	Prepare session at the Forum and 1 st networking meeting	Engagement, common declaration	6.b					
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ACTION 2: Involve local decision-making to improve multi-level water governance

Overall Objectives: Raise the profile of water at local level and links with urban policies

Overall purpose and expected results: Consolidate water governance at local levels, empower those lagging behind and foster sharing of experience and good practices

Overall SDGs Alignment: 6.5 and 6.6b

Coherence with other Priorities: 2, 3

PROJECT 2: ROUNDTABLE OF MAYORS IN AFRICAN CITIES

STEPS	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE	EXPECTED RESULTS	SDGs ALIGNMENT	IMPLEMENTATION	PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS REPRESENTATIVENESS	REPLICABILITY IN OTHER CONTEXTS	REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVENESS	POTENTIAL OVERLAPPING OR COHERENCE WITH OTHER AGs
Mobilisation of local authorities in Africa	To identify and mobilise local authorities responsible for the implementation of water policies, decided at the local, regional or national scale.	Mapping of mayors	Rallying of support for participation in the Roundtable of Mayors	6.5 and 6.6b	Desk research Network	Mayors	Yes		
Identification of other relevant stakeholders	Territorialisation of public water and sanitation policies (planning, financing, implementation)	Identification of basin associations or basins management actors, rural communities, regional councils, according to the	Mapping of RBOs, rural communities, regional councils	6.5 and 6.6b	Desk research Network	Mayors of rural municipalities, etc.) RBOs Water and sanitation service operators	Yes		



	n and monitoring-evaluation)	organisation of each country whose activities are linked to municipal water management.				Representatives of ministries in charge of water			
Identification of thematic items for dialogue	Identification of thematic items for dialogue	Selection based on based on the results of the OECD report on Water Security in African Cities and focusing for example on issues related to expenditure and financing, regulation, accountability, implementation of water resource plans and policy coherence across public policies [(e.g. plans to mitigate the impact of crises (political, economic), climate change, natural disasters, among others)].	Thematic working documents	6.5 and 6.6b	Research		Yes		
Session preparation and Roundable	Gather mayors from various African Cities	Prepare session at the Forum and 1 st networking meeting	Engagement, common declaration	6.b					
Social Media Campaign	Communicate and disseminate the testimonials	Use of social media such as LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.	Reports on the impact of the social media campaign	6.5 and 6.b	Use of social media platforms for the sensitisation, together with	Women Youth Indigenous communities	possible		3.F

			Digital materials, documents, interviews, and filming		youth parliamentarians.	NGOs CSOs			
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ACTION 3: Give the floor to unheard voices through dedicated testimonies

Overall Objective: Engage with unheard voices in water decision-making processes, such as women, indigenous communities and youth, to explore how to make them contribute to the decision-making.

Overall purpose and expected results: Foster inclusivity and participatory decision-making in the water sector

Overall SDGs Alignment: 6.5 and 6.b

Coherence with other Priorities: 3

PROJECT 3: TESTIMONIALS OF VOICES ON WATER

STEPS	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE	EXPECTED RESULTS	SDGs ALIGNMENT	IMPLEMENTATION	PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS REPRESENTATIVENESS	REPLICABILITY IN OTHER CONTEXTS	REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVENESS	POTENTIAL OVERLAPPING OR COHERENCE WITH OTHER AGs
Involvement of Grassroots NGOs	Involve NGOs in the collection of testimonials of voices on water as they are the closest point of contact with targeted stakeholders	Identify lead organisation to carry out the collection of testimonials	Lead identification	6.5 and 6.b		NGOs CSOs	Yes		
Identification of stakeholders	Identify stakeholders who are innovating in water management and not involved in decision-	Engage stakeholders for testimonial collection. The testimonials will showcase women, indigenous communities and youth	Mapping of stakeholders willing to contribute	6.5 and 6.b		Women Youth Indigenous communities	Yes		

	making and who are willing to contribute, in particular youth	organisations, with a particular focus on connecting school-age youth parliamentarians to decision-making processes.							
Collection of testimonials	Make water governance more inclusive in facts and disseminate local knowledge	Collect testimonials through articles, pictures and videos	Consolidation of multimedia collection of stories and testimonials (articles, videos, pictures, etc.,)	6.5 and 6.b	Testimonials will be collected through various means such as interviews and surveys.	CSOs Women Youth Indigenous communities	Yes	Regional level and according to the specificities of the relations of societies with water: culture of water (for example on the African continent: knowledge and knowledge of the Maghreb, Sahelian zone, western coastal zone, central, southern and eastern Africa).	
Preparation Forum session	Showcase what/how those who are often unheard can effectively contribute to water governance	Ensure that everyone in the room has the same right to speak and is considered at the same rank.	Session. The session could be considered as the culminating point of a wide process of talks before and during the forum.	6.5 and 6.b	"Fish bowl meeting" form	Women Youth Indigenous communities	Yes		
Social Media Campaign	Communicate and disseminate	Use of social media such as LinkedIn,	Reports on the impact of the social media	6.5 and 6.b	Use of social media platforms for the	Women Youth Indigenous	possible		3.F

	the testimonials	Instagram, etc.	campaign Digital materials, documents, interviews, and filming		sensitisation, together with youth parliamentarians.	communities NGOs CSOs			
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