Webinar of WGI's Working Group on "Best Practices"

15 June 2017 – 16h30-18h CET

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Key Highlights

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1.   The Secretariat opened the meeting by recalling the progress achieved by the Best Practices Working Group since the last webinar (25 November 2016) and the break-out discussion at the 8th WGI meeting (12-13 January, Rabat). Four important shifts were underlined: first, the underlying objective of the Working Group was clarified, i.e. to act as a platform for **peer-to-peer dialogues** around practical experiences related to water governance, rather than as an observatory of good water governance practices. Second, the narrative around collecting best practices was shifted to collecting **water governance stories**, to better reflect the evolving, rather than static, nature of practical experiences on water governance, and the value added of lessons learned from failure, not only successes. Third, it was agreed that these stories will go through a **selection process** to ensure high-quality and relevant outputs for the Working Group, rather than follow a self-sourcing approach. Fourth, the activities of the Working Group should focus on **discussing the content** of the stories collected, rather than the process of developing an online database, which will be considered at a later stage.

2.   To support the implementation of the *OECD Principles on Water Governance* adopted in 2015, the WGI engaged in a process to identify water governance stories at local, basin, national and international levels as concrete examples of how a given city, region, country, basin organisation or other stakeholder has addressed governance gaps in water-related policy design and implementation, whether they relate to success stories or, conversely, to failed attempts from which helpful lessons can be learned for the future. This work started one year ago and relied on a scoping note formulating ten guiding questions, followed by discussions at two webinars (25 April and 25 November 2016). The preparatory activities carried out by the Working Group[1] led to useful guidance, with two take-away messages in particular that bear consideration. First, the Working Group agreed to **value the quality of water governance stories collected**, over their sheer number. By the same token, it was decided that the priority of the Working Group would be to ensure that stories are well-informed and fit-for-purpose, even if in small numbers. Second, the peer-review of stories by the Working Group should be considered a **value-adding process,** not only to ensure the quality and relevance of stories but also to trigger peer learning and experience sharing on water governance among WGI members and practice providers. A call to share water governance stories was extended from 6 April to 22 May, and 69 stories were collected. Ultimately, selected stories and overarching messages from the Working Group's discussions on water governance will feature in an OECD *Water Governance at a Glance* publication to be released at the 8th World Water Forum, in Brasilia, March 2018.

3.   This 3rd webinar aimed to collect comments and views from the members of the Working Group on an overview of these 69 stories circulated prior to the meeting, and propose ways forward to organise future activities. In all, 28 members participated in the meeting (see list in Annex I). The webinar started with a presentation by the OECD Secretariat on the sample of 69 stories collected, followed by a group discussion. Overall, participants welcomed the high number of stories collected and congratulated the Working Group's co-ordinators for having conducted an initial screening. They underlined that together, the stories provide useful material to move forward on the peer-to-peer discussion on critical water governance issues.

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[1] These activities aimed to i) scope the expectations for best practices through a short survey; ii) take stock of existing databases on best practices; and iii) pilot-test the draft template for collecting practices. The results were consolidated in a background note "Towards a Database of Water Governance Best Practices" discussed at the 8th WGI Meeting (12-13 January 2017, Rabat)

Highlights from discussions

Presentation by the OECD Secretariat

4.   The OECD provided an overview of the sample of 69 water governance stories that were collected between 6 April and 22 May through an online template developed by the Working Group. In all, WGI members provided 33 of these stories, while other members played a critical role to disseminate the call for contributions among their networks and constituencies. A meta-analysis of the stories collected helped make the following observations:

- There is a **geographical balance** across the stories, with 37 coming from OECD countries, 11 from BRICS and OECD key partner countries, and the others from non-OECD countries, thus covering the 5 continents.

- All relevant **scales** for water governance are represented throughout the stories, from local to national. There is a slight majority of stories at the local level (35 stories), while others are set across multiple scales.

- A variety of **water functions** is also reflected, with safe drinking water, sanitation/water quality, and IWRM being illustrated by at least 40 stories, whilst water-related disasters got 20 stories.

- The **OECD Principles on Water Governance** are well covered, each one being captured by at least 30 stories. There is a slight predominance of stories on clear roles and responsibilities (principle 1) and stakeholder engagement (principle 10). A large majority of stories have ticked several Principles and peer-review discussions will help determine how well they illustrate them.

5.   The Working Group coordinators (Suez, SIWI, Water Integrity Network and OECD) conducted an **initial screening** of the 69 stories to check that they relate to water *governance*, and not water management at large. Indeed, there was a clear call from the Working Group to remain focused on governance issues, given that there is already a multitude of practices/case studies available on water management (as evidenced by the 37 online databases previously inventoried by the Working Group). The coordinators also checked that the templates were sufficiently filled-in, particularly the assessment of the stories, to be peer-reviewed. As a result, the 69 stories were **pre-classified**: 30 were declared ready for peer-review; 35 stories need additional information (i.e. for these, story providers will be given an opportunity to complement their templates); and 4 stories were considered not applicable. The outcomes of the initial screening were presented in an overview document shared with the Working Group.

6.   The OECD presented the **expectations** for the Working Group in the coming 6 months. First, peer-review discussions will be conducted zooming in key water governance issues around which stories will be clustered. The peer-review should be considered a means to an end, with the stories serving as a starting point to trigger **policy dialogues** on water governance among the Working Group members and story providers to share experience and learn from each other. Then, peer-review discussions are expected to shed light on key **cross-cutting messages on water governance** in the form of lessons learned on reform processes, emerging challenges, new stakeholders, etc., and will be featured in the OECD *Water Governance at a Glance* publication.

7.   The OECD suggested organising the peer-review discussions around 3 **key governance dimensions**, whereby peer-review discussion could investigate:

- **Policy frameworks**, focusing on stories that address legal and institutions frameworks against which water policies are developed and implemented. For instance, several stories refer to policy reforms or policy shifts (e.g. in Ireland, Portugal, Bretagne region (France), etc.), while others look at adaptive/flexible governance frameworks to adapt to changing environments and new concerns (e.g. Israel, Alsace region (France)).

- **Institutions**, zooming in on stories that illustrate the institutions in charge of developing/implementing water policies/projects/programmes at different government levels. A topic emerging from several stories is the new roles of cities in addressing urban water challenges and developing new solutions. Examples in Spain, Austria, Italy, etc. on water-wise or climate-resilient cities could be the basis to explore new forms of local water governance. Another topic could consider the role of river basin organisations, in light of stories showing new alternative approaches emerging in basin governance (e.g. Austria, Vietnam).

- **Instruments**, building on stories that present tools and mechanisms through which water policies/projects are implemented. As an example, stories on stakeholder engagement could spark discussions on the impacts of inclusive processes on policy/projects relying on cases in the Netherlands, Jordan, Australia, Korea, etc. Other stories shed light on emerging/innovative mechanisms, from water funds (Brazil) to open data monitoring systems (Netherlands, Israel) that could be the focus of discussions on how these new tools are helping achieve water management outcomes.

8.   It was stressed that this approach is the same that is being used to structure the draft **water governance indicators**. As such, it provides an opportunity to link the work of the Best Practices Working Group to the activities of the Indicators Working Group, and the stories could also provide useful illustrations and qualitative information to complement the assessment carried out through the indicators.

9.   The OECD concluded by suggesting three avenues to **disseminate** the stories reviewed. First, they will illustrate the **OECD publication** *Water Governance at a Glance* (e.g. in the form of boxes, etc.). Second, they will be the subject of presentations during WGI-led sessions on water governance at the **8th World Water Forum** (Brasilia, March 2018). Lastly, the stories will be **made available online** and accessible from the OECD website, before a database is set-up at a later stage.

Group discussion

10.   Participants shared some comments on the **overview** and **relevance** of the 69 water governance stories that were collected:

- It was acknowledged that the stories are diverse, provide a wealth of information, and represent a **sound basis** for peer-learning discussions on water governance.

- It was suggested that the Working Group explore how to include additional stories at the least costs, including by building on **previous calls for case studies** (e.g. 69 cases collected for the 2015 OECD report *Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance*; 48 cases included in the 2016 OECD report *Water Governance in Cities*, etc.).

11.   Participants shared their views on **substantive areas** around which stories could be clustered, and peer-review/knowledge-sharing discussions structured:

- Overall, the proposal by OECD was welcomed as pertinent and relevant to link the stories to the draft indicator framework. It was proposed to add a 4th **dynamic dimension** to the 3 blocks suggested that would look at transformational aspects of the stories, on **capacity** (i.e. inputs required to achieve impact on water governance) and **learning** (i.e. to discuss how the stories contribute to learning processes on water governance and the OECD Principles). It was also suggested to broaden the "institution" dimension to "**actors**". In addition, another dimension could look at stories illustrating governance issues related to **investments**. Lastly, the clustering could factor-in not only governance themes, but also **governance scales** (local, basin, national).

- It was stressed that peer-review discussions not lose sight of the contextual nature of water governance. As such, **geographical factors** should be taken into account to reflect the different water governance priorities that different regions face.

- Peer-review discussions on **stakeholder engagement** should consider the work done by the former WGI Working Group on the same topic, as well as existing frameworks of reference (e.g. the ladder of participation, etc.).

- A call for caution warned against the risk of seeing the OECD Principles being diluted across the clusters. It was therefore recommended that peer-review discussions always check that stories illustrate the Principles well enough.

- It was suggested that the peer-review discussion look at the **effectiveness** of the stories, highlighting to what degree the initial situation described in a story has been improved; whether incentives are in place in the stories to **improve/change/innovate** water governance; and the **coherence** across the policy frameworks, institutions and instruments dimensions (e.g. echoing the "knowing/wanting/enabling" approach in strategic learning).

12.   Some participants volunteered to **host peer-review discussions**. Suez, The Open University, AgroParisTech, Israel, IWRA and GWP are currently exploring the possibility to organise webinars and workshops between July and October 2017.

13.   Finally, participants suggested building on upcoming international events on water as platforms to further **disseminate the stories** (e.g. Stockholm World Water Week, Amsterdam Water Week, etc.).

Next steps

14.   Participants who signalled an interest to host peer-review discussions were invited to contact the OECD Secretariat to flag what would be their preferred governance topic, and possible dates/format to organise the peer-review. In view of the 9th WGI meeting (3-4 July 2017, Paris), coordinators will develop a proposal to cluster stories in order to kick-off the peer-review discussions during the meeting's break-out session of the Working Group (4 July, 14h30-16h15). In the meantime, the 30 stories ready for peer-review will be shared with the Working Group members in a Dropbox folder. The OECD Secretariat will contact the providers of the 35 stories that require additional information and offer a 2-week window for them to complement their templates in order to be selected for peer-review.

Annex I: List of participants

Institution	Name
AgroParisTech – France	Sophie Richard
Aqua Publica Europea	Annette Jantzen
Association of Public Services and Enterprises – Austria	Marcus Heiss
Centre for Water Security and Cooperation	Luke Wilson
Dutch Water Authorities	Rob Uijterlinde
Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources – Germany	Michael Eichholz
Flanders Knowledge Water Centre - Belgium	Dirk Halet
German Association of Energy and Water Industries (BDEW)	Joerg Rehberg
Global Water Partnership	Francois Brikke
International Water Association	Carolina Latorre
International Water Resources Association	Alice Colson
Japan Water Agency	Tadashige Kawasaki
Korea Environment Institute	Ij Kim
Ministry of Economy – Israel	Adi Yefet
	Laura Braun
Ministry of Environmental Protection – Israel	Alon Zask
Open University – UK	Kevin Collins
Stockholm International Water Institute	Jenny Gronwall
Suez	Joannie Leclerc
The Nature Conservancy	Aparna Sridhar
	Enora Philippe
Turkish Water Institute (SUEN)	Osman Tikansak
University of Dundee - Scotland	Sarah Hendry
University of Lisbon - Portugal	Susana Neto
Utrecht University - Netherlands	Anoeska Buijze
Water Integrity Network	Teun Bastemeijer
Water Youth Network	Maélis Monnier
WWF – Colombia	Pablo Montes Iannini

Annex II: Agenda of the webinar

- **Presentation by OECD Secretariat (15 min)**
  - Overview of the 69 stories
    - Rationale for the Coordinators pre-selection
    - Expected output
  - Key governance dimensions from the stories
    - Policy frameworks
    - Institutions
    - Instruments
  - Suggestions for organising the peer-review
    - How to cluster stories
    - Who does what
    - How to combine selection *and* discussion

- **Group discussion (60 min)**
  - Comments on stories received and their relevance
  - Prioritisation of substantive areas for knowledge sharing
  - Volunteering for the peer-to-peer learning and review
  - Ways forward to disseminate the stories

- **Next steps and expectations for the WGI meeting (15 min)**