Webinar of WGI's Working Group on "Indicators"

15 June 2017 – 14h-16h CEST

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Key Highlights

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Introduction

1.   The webinar aimed to discuss the results of the pilot-test of the OECD Water Governance Indicators with the members of the Working Group on Indicators. Eleven pilot-testers from OECD and non-OECD countries volunteered to carry out this exercise at national, regional and basin level between May and June 2017. A total of 33 institutions took part to the webinar (see Annex I).

2.   First, the OECD Secretariat provided an **overview of the process** that has led to the indicator framework that was subject to pilot testing. The bottom-up process started in April 2014 at the 3rd OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) Meeting. A preliminary step consisted in developing an Inventory to take stock of existing indicators and measurement frameworks on water governance. A first indicator framework was discussed at the 6th OECD WGI meeting (November 2015, Paris) and revised by the 7th WGI meeting (June 2016, The Hague). In November 2016, members of the Working Group on Indicator gathered into a webinar (see summary here) to discuss the 60+ suggestions on indicators collected prior to the webinar, on the basis of a template prepared by the OECD Secretariat. Feedback and comments received from WGI members were included in a revised version, which was discussed in at the 8th WGI Meeting (Rabat, 12-13 January 2017).

3.   Following the 8th WGI Meeting, the Secretariat focussed on the following: 1) provided clarification on the **objectives** of the work: it consists in a self-assessment tool aiming at triggering dialogue amongst governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on water governance. It is not a tool for systemic monitoring and reporting, instead it is based on a voluntary approach, whereby interested counties, regions, basins and cities can assess their water governance system in place and discuss expectations for the future. The Indicator Framework will not be used to benchmark countries' performances; 2) **Simplified and streamlined** the indicator framework: compared to previous version the indicator framework, the revised version encompasses three components: one based on 36 indicators selected amongst the 250 originally proposed, measured by means of a traffic light system and other two components as complementary material. Component 2 consists of a checklist containing 100+ questions to guide the discussion on water governance beyond the indicators included in the traffic light system. Component 3 contains 36 quantitative indicators to allow for data visualisation that will feature in country/ basin/ region/ city water governance profiles to be published in the final OECD report "Water Governance at a Glance" (2018).

4.   In April 2017, the Secretariat launched a call for applications to pilot-test the proposed indicator framework, in order to assess, amongst others, its robustness and relevance. A total of 12 pilot testers were selected and advised to carry out the exercise through multi-stakeholders workshops. Pilot test workshops have been conducted in May/ June 2017 by 11 pilot-testers at different scales (Table 1)[1]. Following the pilot-test, the indicator framework will be revised and discussed at the 9th WGI Meeting to be held in Paris on 3-4 July 2017. This will conclude the first phase of the pilot test and open the second one, consisting in data collection on the basis of the revised indicator framework.

Table 1.   Pilot testers of the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework

Authority	Scale	Pilot name	Country	Workshop
Selangor Water Authority	Basin	Selangor	Malaysia	25 May
Sebou River Basin Agency	Basin	Sebou	Morocco	18 May
WWF Colombia	Basin	Rio Nare in Antioquia	Colombia	30 May
National Water Authority	National	Peru	Peru	30 May

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[1] The remaining pilot-test to be carried out in Kinshasa (DRC) will be carried out on 29 June 2017, with the support of GWP, and the outcomes will be reported at the 9th WGI meeting.

International Secretariat for Water	Basin	Rimac	Peru	10 And 17 May
Association of Water Utilities	Basin	Segura	Spain	7 June
Jucar Hydrographic confederation	Basin	Jucar	Spain	1 June
Scottish Government	Region	Scotland	Scotland	25 May
National Water Authority	National	Cabo Verde	Cabo Verde	26 May
Association for Water & Gas	National	Austria	Austria	23 May
Global Water Partnership	City	Kinshasa	RDCongo	29 June
Deltares	Province	Eindhoven & Helmond	Netherlands	24 May

Highlights from discussions

Presentation by the OECD Secretariat

5.   The OECD Secretariat presented the main findings of the 1st phase of the pilot-tests based on the reporting back by the pilot-testers.

6.   First, there was a **unanimous consensus** among pilot-testers with regards to the **Traffic Light System as a useful methodology** to reflect the existence and the level of implementation of water governance dimensions. Pilot-testers argued that it is easy to understand, helps to prioritise actions, and is an effective and structured form of organising stakeholders' inputs. Some difficulties were encountered in finding a consensus amongst stakeholders on the level of implementation of given governance dimensions. The **large number of nuances** per indicator was signalled as the main impediment to agree on just one colour of the traffic light. Pilot-testers suggested some alternatives to overcome this difficulty, including the use of the DPSIR methodology, smiley and sad faces, weight the scale prior to evaluating the indicator, and more disaggregated indicators.

7.   Second, there was a wide agreement (80% of pilot-testers) on the **5 options in the traffic light system** for assessing policy frameworks, institutions and instruments. Pilot-testers pointed out that there is a **tendency towards the yellow option** due to the intrinsic characteristics of water governance (i.e. no dimension of governance is perfectly designed and implemented). Many suggestions were put on the table to deal with this issue, including: introducing an additional category, and colour, between "partly implemented" and "functioning"; dividing each colour into three categories or sub-levels; specifying "unanimously adopted by stakeholders" (or not) in each indicator; or defining rules a priori to decide the colour, among others. A total of 50% of pilot testers agreed on the need of more guidance on the colour categorisation, as well as on the use and implementation of the indicator framework. Others claimed that self-assessment and free interpretation of some aspects of the indicator framework provide more flexibility for dialogue, but also less comparability. Thus, the main message was that there is a need to **find a balance** between how prescriptive the framework is and how open for interpretation.

8.   A total of 73% of pilot-testers considered that the indicators proposed in the traffic light system are **relevant to all scales** (e.g. national, basin, regional, local). Evaluating this aspect of the indicator framework showcased the "multi-level" nature of water governance, however some pilot-testers expressed that the framework **seems more valid at national level**. In particular, it was claimed that it is difficult to apply it at the local scale. Other pilot-testers signalled that **some of the indicators mixed scales** in a particular governance dimension. For instance, it was observed that while indicators under the "policy framework" and "instruments" clusters could be valid for any scale, the cluster on "institutions" seem to be referring predominantly to the national scale. Moreover, **90% of the pilot-testers claimed that the indicators were relevant to all water management functions (e.g. water services, water resources, water disasters)**.

9.   A total of 70% of pilot testers agreed that the traffic light should not only provide a static picture of the current performance but also an indication of the expected **trends** over the coming 3 years. However, it was claimed that 3 years might be a short period to perceive relevant changes, and the proposal was to extend to 5 years (short-term) and/or 10 years (long-term).

10.   **Component 2** was considered by 78% of pilot-testers a useful complementary tool to the traffic light system. Some issues raised with regards to the checklist are: its length, some duplication with the traffic light, and the need to establish a clear link between the indicators of the traffic light and the questions of the checklist. **Component 3** was considered relevant to provide for data visualisation in a given city, basin, region, or country by 80% of the pilot-testers. Pilot-testers stressed that for these indicators to be useful they have to be clear and meaningful. They should avoid overwhelming countries with data collection by building on existing databases, such as the SDGs monitoring programme, World Bank, etc. Pilot-testers also warned that depending on the country, data might only be available at certain scales.

11.   In terms of content, the traffic light system was reported to be **fit-for-purpose as a tool for dialogue on water governance** as well as a consistent framework able to track changes over time. However, 45% of pilot-testers found **some dimension of the traffic light not clearly understandable**. For instance, it was highlighted that some dimensions leave too much room for interpretation, are too complex, or that there is no clear cut between institutions and instruments. **It was emphasised again that the yellow colour raises doubts** when it comes to evaluate the indicators. There were also contradicting suggestions such as aggregating indicators into 12 overarching indicators versus disaggregating into more indicators by using the checklist. Moreover, 64% of pilot-testers signalled that they **will need to produce new data to document the checklist and supply the quantitative indicators**.

12.   With regards to the process, pilot-testers reported that the available **human resources were sufficient** to carry out the pilot-test, however additional finacial resources would have helped the overall organisation of the workshops. Mostly, workshops were half-day long. This time was not enough to cover the entire exercise given the complexity of the discussions. Pilot testers signaleed the absence of some categories of stakeholders in the discussion, such as the private sector, including hydropower. The pilot-testers then identified key challenges to successfully carry out the process. Among these, the existence of **asymmetries of information and knowledge among stakeholder groups** was highlighted as one of the most prominent. The latter hindered the active involvement of some stakeholder groups in the discussions. Finally, most pilot-testers claimed that pilot-testing the indicator framework was a **useful exercise to self-assess the water governance system** (82%), and it also helped to **find ways forward for improvements** (73%) by stimulating dialogue or will do in the future.

13.   In conclusion there was an **overall support** of the indicator framework as proposed. However, for **component 1**, there was a call for further clarity in the definition of the indicator and in its composition. For **component 2** there was a call for a more explicit link with component 1; for **component 3** there were several proposals to add indicators to the provide list, while distinguishing between water management and water governance indicators. Pilot testers agreed that the self-assessment should take into account all the Principles in once (rather that carrying out separated analysis on selected Principles only); and that there is the need of a glossary with definitions.

Group discussion

14.   Participants shared some comments on the **pilot-test outcomes** and **results**. First, it was pointed out that the **local level** was the least represented in the pilot-test. Participants also wondered whether **disaggregate data** on the results of the pilot-tests would be made available, such as across government levels, categories of stakeholders, etc. There was a call for caution against the risk of using the "**not**

applicable" category of the traffic light system as an excuse to avoid discussing certain issues. Hence, the not applicable option should be justified. Indeed, discussions on the draft indicators should not be politicised, but rather build understanding and capacity among stakeholders to strengthen the legitimacy of a given water governance system.

15. Pilot-testers (Cabo Verde, Austria, Malaysia, Peru, Sebou River Basin [Morocco]) took the floor to share their experience and lessons learned:

- They all welcomed the **fruitful, and useful, debates** that took place among stakeholders on the draft indicator framework.

- They explained that most of the discussions focused on the **traffic light system**, while feedback on the other 2 components (checklist and quantitative indicators) was provided in written, for lack of time during the workshop.

- They underlined the importance of providing **enough time** to have in-depth discussion on the indicators, especially as a greater number of stakeholders involved requires more time to find a consensus (e.g. Cabo Verde plans to allocate 3 days for the 2nd phase on filling-in the indicator framework).

- They pointed out that **consensus could not be found** on all topics, and the latter will be revisited during the 2nd phase, when stakeholders will be asked to provide evidence to back their assessment. It was underlined that finding full consensus on the static assessment should not be considered the ultimate goal, but rather encourage stakeholders to reach a consensus on what the ways forward should be.

- They found that the **checklist** has some redundancies with the traffic light system, but overall it was very useful to sort out contentious issues.

- They consider the indicator framework to be sophisticated, thus it requires **time and detailed information** for stakeholder to fully grasp its meaning. But there is also a risk of over-simplifying the indicator framework, thus a balance needs to be found.

16. Participants all agreed that the pilot-tests provided a **reality check** to move forward, and confirmed the pertinence of the methodology. They also shared some suggestions of **improvements** on the content/methodology of indicators:

- **Key definitions** could be added to the draft indicator framework, for instance to clarify the distinction between water management and water governance.

- Some indicators are composed of **several variables**, making it hard for stakeholders to reach a single colour in the traffic light. By the same token, it is difficult to reach an assessment (e.g. a given colour in the traffic-light system) at national level that takes into account the **diversity of situations** within a country (e.g. river basins in Peru face different governance challenges, etc.).

- Additional guidance on the methodology, **how to use the indicators,** and where do find existing data would help, building for instance on existing frameworks such as the GLAAS report and WIN's Integrity Scans.

– It should be specified how regularly the assessment exercise will be carried out from now on, such as every 3 years to launch each edition of *Water Governance at a Glance* at the World Water Forum.

– It was suggested to involve **"observers"** (i.e. stakeholders from outside the pilot-test areas) in the discussion on the indicators for the 2nd phase, to provide an external view and expertise to the assessment exercise, but not be considered as "watchdogs".

– It was also suggested to build synergies with **other on-going monitoring processes** (e.g. related to SDG 6.5 on IWRM, etc.), to ensure coherence and complementarities. One way forward would be to liaise with countries pilot-testing both the monitoring mechanisms for SDG 6 and the draft water governance initiative (e.g. Peru, Netherlands). The OECD Secretariat reminded participants that these processes are running in parallel with different objectives and timelines. Nonetheless, organisations involved (UN-Water, WHO, UNEP OECD) are liaising to seek possible synergies.

– It was proposed to link the work of the Indicator Working Group more closely with the activities of the Best Practice Working Group, including by using the **water governance "stories"** that were collected to illustrate some of the governance challenges revealed through the indicators. Indeed, pilot-testers reported that stakeholders involved in the pilot-test were eager to learn from other countries, basins, cities conducting a similar exercise, particularly looking for solutions to challenges they could not solve themselves. Practical experiences illustrated by the water governance stories will be useful in this effort.

17.   Participants explained their **expectations** for the 9th WGI meeting (3-4 July) and suggested for instance that the Working Group break-out discussion should be an opportunity for pilot-testers to **share some lessons learned from organising and conducting workshops** on the indicators, which could be useful for other institutions considering taking part in the 2nd phase on collecting data.

18.   Finally, some participants who did not contributed to the pilot-test signalled their interest to take part in the **2nd step** on filling the indicators, including the Turkish Water Institute.

Next steps

The Secretariat briefly introduced the main milestones for the Indicator Framework on the road to the World Water Forum in March 2018, Brasilia:

- **June 2017:** revision of the Indicator Framework (components 1, 2, and 3) based on pilot testers feedback
- **3-4 July 2017:** 9th meeting of the WGI (Paris) – 2nd consultation with WGI delegates on the Indicator Framework
- **August 2017:** Revised/Final Indicator Framework
- **September 2017:** 2nd phase of the pilot-test (data collection for the final report)
- **20-21 November 2017:** 10th meeting of the WGI (Vienna) – peer-review of the *Water Governance at a Glance* draft report
- **March 2018:** Launch of the final Report – 8th World Water Forum (Brasilia)

Annex I: List of participants

First Name	Last Name	Institution
Tadashige	Kawasaki	NARBO / Japan Water Agency
Dean	Muruven	WWF-International
Elsa	Favrot	ENGIE
Teun	Bastemeijer	WIN
Carolina	Latorre	The International Water Association
Osman	Tikansak	SUEN
Dirk	Halet	Vlakwa
Daniel	Valensuela	INBO
Scott	Rodger	Shepherd and Wedderburn
Samira	El Haouat	ABH/SEBOU
Gerald	Ellen	Deltares
Anoeska	Buijze	Utrecht University
Pablo	Montes Iannini	WWF
Jon	Rathjen	Scottish Government
John	Dini	Water Research Commission, South Africa
Marcus	Heiss	Association of public services and enterprises Austria
Francois	Brikke	Global Water Partnership
Tatiana	Ortega	Jucar River Basin Authority
Larissa	Varela	IST (ANAS- Pilot Terter)
Aparna	Sridhar	The Nature Conservancy
Lesha	Witmer	women for water
Maria	Salvetti	Sorbonne Business School - Astee
Michael	Eichholz	BGR
Alice	Colson	IWRA
Marina	Takane	World Health Organization
Jorg	Rehberg	BDEW
Guillermo	Avanzini	National Water Authority/ Peru
Griselda	Medina	CONAGUA
Pierre Alain	Roche	ASTEE
Donal	O'Leary	Transparency International
Diana	Faccio	Suez
Andrew	Ross	ANU
Annette	Jantzen	Aqua Publica Europea

Annex II: Agenda of the webinar

- **Progress** since the 8th WGI meeting and **changes** brought to the indicator framework – OECD Secretariat (5 min)

- Rationale, Process and Scope of the **Pilot-tests**, OECD Secretariat (10 min)

- Key **lessons learned** and suggestions from the pilot-tests, OECD Secretariat (15 min)
    - o Methodology
    - o Content
    - o Process
    - o Outcomes

- **Group discussion**, including inputs from some of the pilot-testers (1h)
    - o Do you have any question on the pilot tests outcomes / results?
    - o Do you agree the pilot-tests provide a reality check to go forward?
    - o Where do you see the need for further improvement on the content/methodology of indicators ?
    - o What would be your expectations for the July WGI meeting?

- Insights/responses/reactions from the **Coordinators** – ASTEE, INBO, Transparency International - (20 min)

- **Next steps** (10 min)