



Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Second Joint meeting of the Working Groups on Monitoring and Assessment and on Integrated Water Resources Management

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

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Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation: lessons learnt and recommendations

Annotated outline of the brochure

Prepared by the secretariat

Background

At its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) decided to support Parties and other States, at their request, in improving cooperation on their transboundary waters: (a) by highlighting the potential to generate a broad range of significant benefits for cooperating countries, on the basis of the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47) (Policy Guidance Note); and (b) by providing a forum to assess and communicate such benefits in order to support the strengthening of ongoing cooperation.

The Policy Guidance Note was applied in a number of basins worldwide, namely the Okavango-Cubango, Sio-Malaba-Malakisi and Drina River basins.

The present document builds on the experiences of applying the Policy Guidance Note in these basins. Its aims at highlighting the outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations from the benefit assessment exercises carried out in these three basins. It contains the proposed structure and key messages of the brochure.

The Working Group is invited to discuss the annotated outline of the brochure, for its finalization and publication by the 8th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

* Second joint meeting of the two working groups.

Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation: lessons learnt and recommendations

Annotated outline of the brochure

I Introduction

(Target length: 1 page)

The main objective of this brochure is to take stock of the experiences with applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication*¹ in three transboundary basins² in order to help inform the design and realization of future benefit assessment exercises.

The introduction will highlight the various motivations for carrying out a benefit assessment exercise:

- To realize the potential value of cooperation by bringing fact-based arguments and incentives to cooperate, revealing previously overlooked benefits
- To support a process of preparing for accession to the Water Convention by understanding the benefits of cooperation
- To contribute to the implementation of the cooperation requirements under international water law.

II The process of carrying out a benefit assessment

(Target length: 2 pages)

This section will present how the three benefit assessment exercises were launched and developed in the three basins. It will discuss to what extent they were linked to other ongoing processes. It will identify lessons learned, good practices and recommendations.

Examples of key messages include:

- Integrate a benefit assessment into other ongoing analytical exercises and policy processes
- Adopt a flexible approach to benefit assessment realization to adapt to such ongoing processes
- Use existing platforms for transboundary water cooperation discussions in the basin, when possible, to assess cooperation benefits
- Ensure stakeholders participation in the assessment process at different decision-making levels.

III Identifying the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

(Target length: 2 pages)

This section will present how the benefits of transboundary water cooperation were identified in the three basins. It will discuss the main benefits that were identified. It will identify lessons learned, good practices and recommendations.

Examples of key messages include:

- Use the typology of benefits to effectively guide a dialogue on the identification of the broad range of benefits of cooperation
- Adapt the typology to accommodate how stakeholders weight the importance of the different categories of benefits

¹ Publication available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41340>

² The Drina River Basin (South Eastern Europe), the Okavongo-Cubango Basin (Southern Africa) and the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi Basin (Eastern Africa).

- Raise awareness on potential cooperation benefits which are not commonly recognized, such as regional economic cooperation benefits
- Look at both the benefits of cooperation at country level (national perspective) but also at basin level (basin-wide perspective)
- Identify both past/current benefits as well as potential future benefits
- Use the typology of benefits to facilitate mindset change to think in terms of outcome benefits (final impact on beneficiaries) instead of process benefits only (such as data exchange, monitoring...)
- Combine expert analysis and stakeholder consultations to identify the benefits of cooperation.

IV Assessing the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

(Target length: 2 pages)

This section will present how the benefits of transboundary water cooperation have been assessed. It will identify lessons learned, good practices and recommendations.

Examples of key messages include:

- Move from identification to assessment of the benefits of cooperation to inform decision-making, even if it is challenging
- Be aware of the difficulties in carrying out quantitative assessments, and the risk that their outcomes can be contested
- More robust methodologies to carry out qualitative assessments should be developed
- Identify and describe specific cooperative actions or projects to be implemented to be able to carry out more fine-grained qualitative assessments.

V Communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

(Target length: 2 pages)

This section will present how the benefits of transboundary water cooperation have been communicated. It will identify lessons learned, good practices and recommendations.

Examples of key messages include:

- Do not neglect the phase of communication of the benefit assessment exercises' results
- Dedicate attention to the communication of the benefits of cooperation even in basins where transboundary water cooperation is well established to contribute to the sustainability (and funding) of cooperation
- Start the benefit assessment exercise with defining a plan for the communication of benefits: target audiences, level of details and evidence needed to convince target audience and characteristics of the assessment process to ensure the legitimacy of its results
- Consider the process of developing a benefit assessment *per se* as a valuable communication exercise, and therefore pay attention to involving the right stakeholders in the benefit assessment process.

VI Conclusions and recommendations

(Target length: 1 page)

This section will include overarching conclusions. It will also offer few recommendations on work needed to support the development of possible future benefit assessments.

Examples of overarching conclusions and recommendations:

- Access to flexible funding, so that the benefit assessment is carried out at the right time taken advantage of opportunities to inform relevant policy processes and piggy-back on well-resourced analytical exercises, would help to maximise the impact of a benefit assessment exercise.
- There is demand for linking the benefit assessment to the development of basin investment plans – more thought needs to be given to how to support this demand.
- A tool kit on methodological approaches for qualitative and quantitative assessments of the benefits of cooperation would be a useful tool to support future assessments.
- Benefit assessment exercises have proven useful to engage actors not usually involved in transboundary water management, such as tourism sector.
- A benefit assessment exercise should be flexible and accommodate timeline and resources available, from a session in a regional event on transboundary water cooperation to a full-fledged dedicated process in a basin that could take several months to be completed.