

Water Allocation in Transboundary Basins: *Tools, approaches & lessons learned under the Water Convention*

Mr Remy Kinna
Legal Officer, Water Convention Secretariat

Water Allocation in Transboundary Basins

- Water allocation - the allocation in terms of quantity, quality or timing of water resources between and within different sectors and for different uses - is one of the biggest challenges in water management and protection.
- In a transboundary context – this involves 2 or more states
- Increasing demands on water from different sectors, growing water scarcity and climate variability have led to a growing global interest in the topic of water allocation, particularly in a transboundary context, as competition over shared water resources rises.
- **Objective:** Raise capacity on development of equitable and sustainable transboundary arrangements on water allocation based on increased understanding and knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of water allocation in transboundary basins and aquifers, including mechanisms, tools and practices.

ACTIVITIES

- **Regional, basin or bilateral workshops, workshop session, webinars etc**
- **Promoting use of the Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context and its Summary Handbook**
- **Promoting related tools (ie Development of Agreements, WEFE Nexus), exploring practical synergies and linkages between national and transboundary allocation approaches.**

Handbook On Transboundary Water Allocation (Published Oct 2021)

Aim = practical guide, overview of the key elements, frameworks and modalities

A compendium style Handbook, covering the major topics
46 exemplar case studies

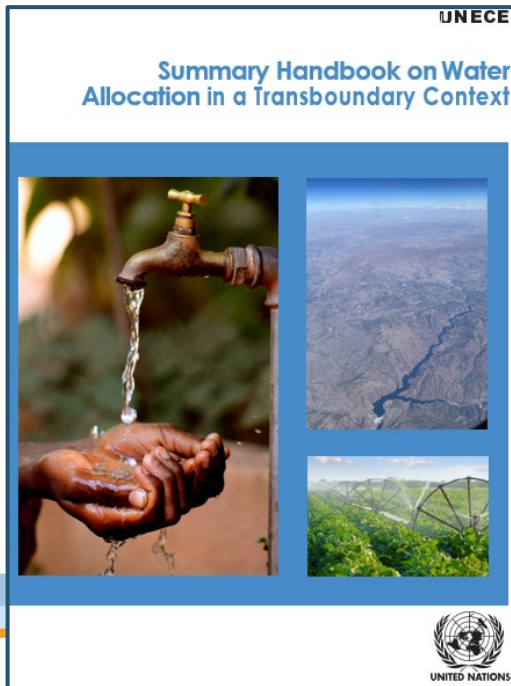
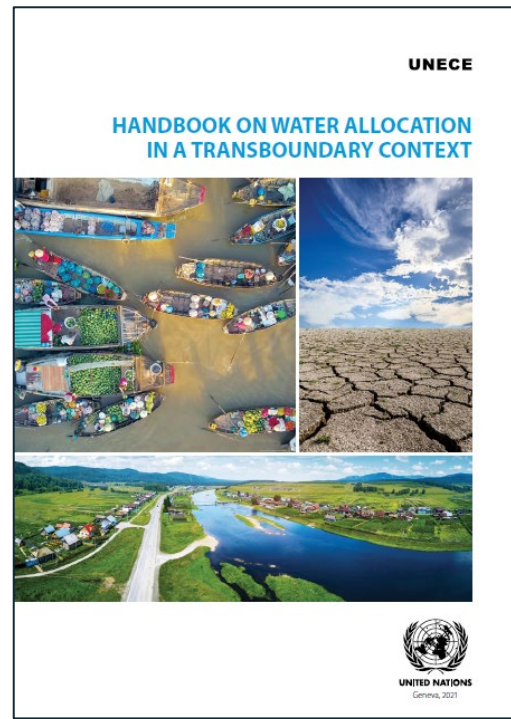
First global overview of water allocation agreements in transboundary waters

Intergovernmental process =

Participation of >100 countries, 70 international organizations, 20 river basin organizations = Adopted at MOP 9 in 2021

>50 experts selected for expertise, regions & diversity => balanced composition

Provide general technical oversight, advice & inputs on structure & content



Tools & Publications

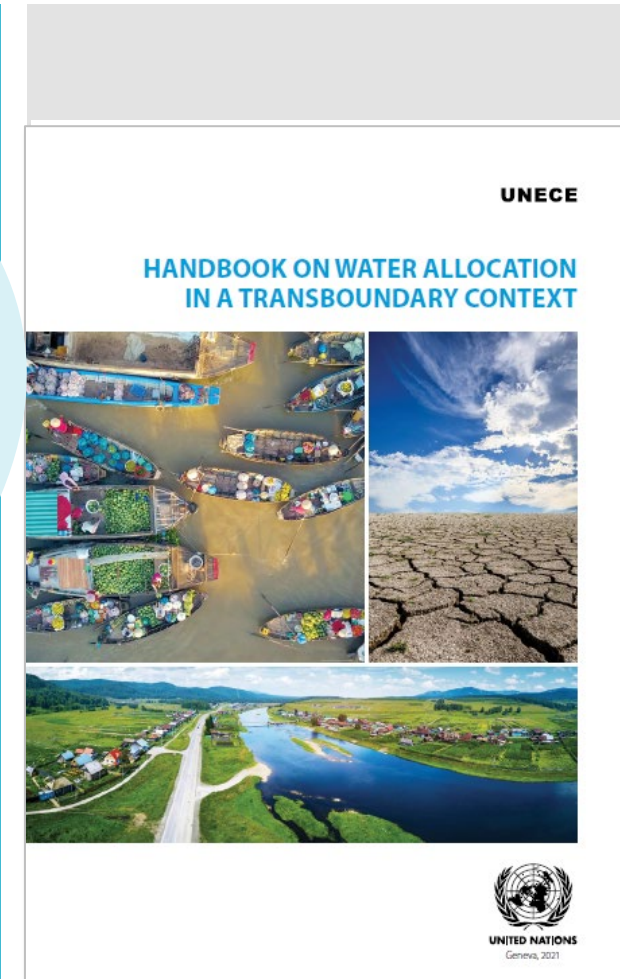
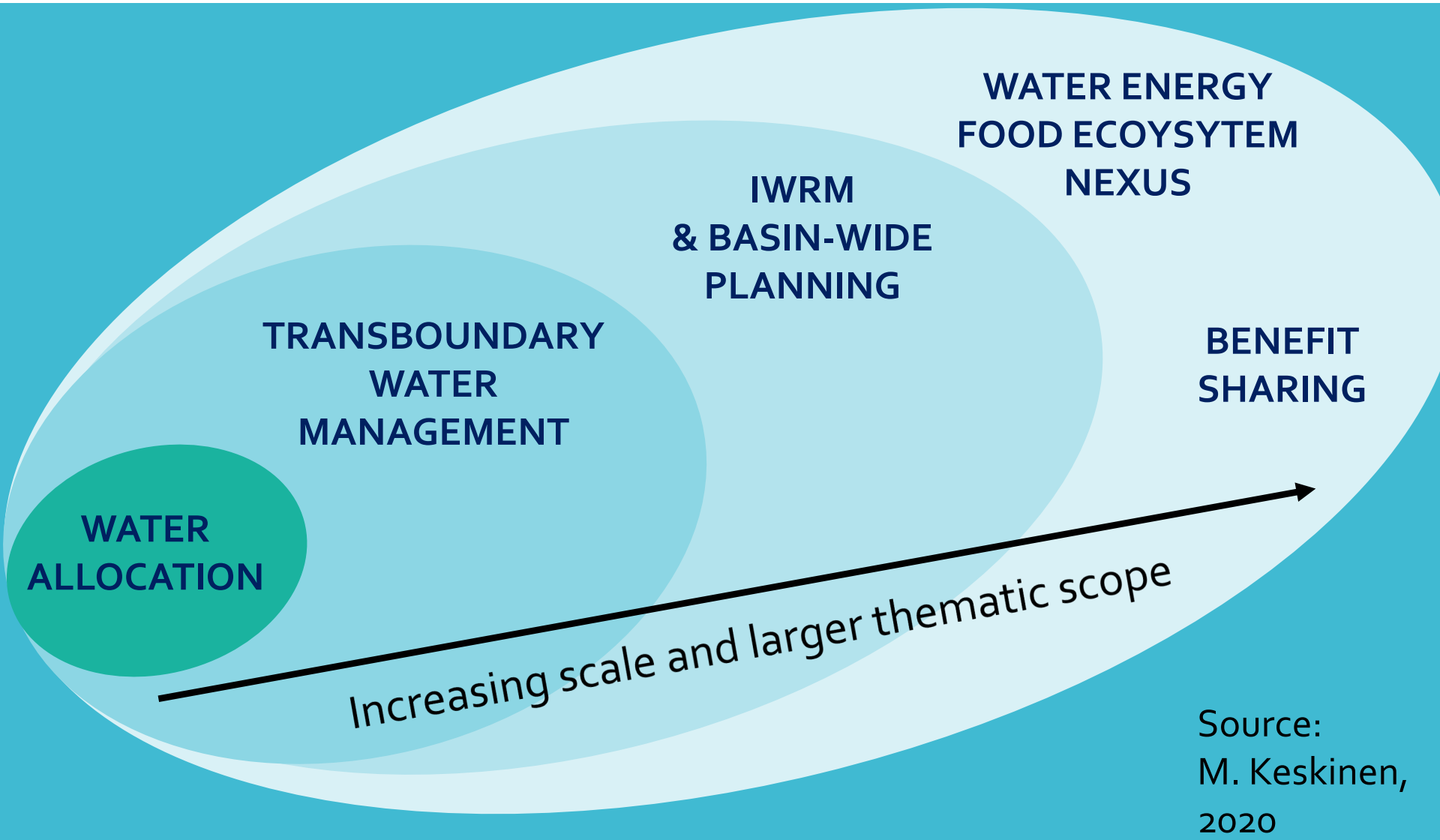
Summary Handbook On Water Allocation (Published Dec 2023)

A timely update to the Handbook given the increasing prevalence of water scarcity and drought since the Handbook was adopted at MOP9

A shorter, targeted practical resource for policy / decision-makers featuring snapshot of key elements, frameworks, modalities to consider

Reference to full Handbook Case studies + New case studies highlighting emerging initiatives and practices

Complementary Approaches to Consider



Handbook: Selection of Key Messages

Collecting and sharing reliable data and information is a critical foundation for the planning and implementation of water allocation in transboundary basins.

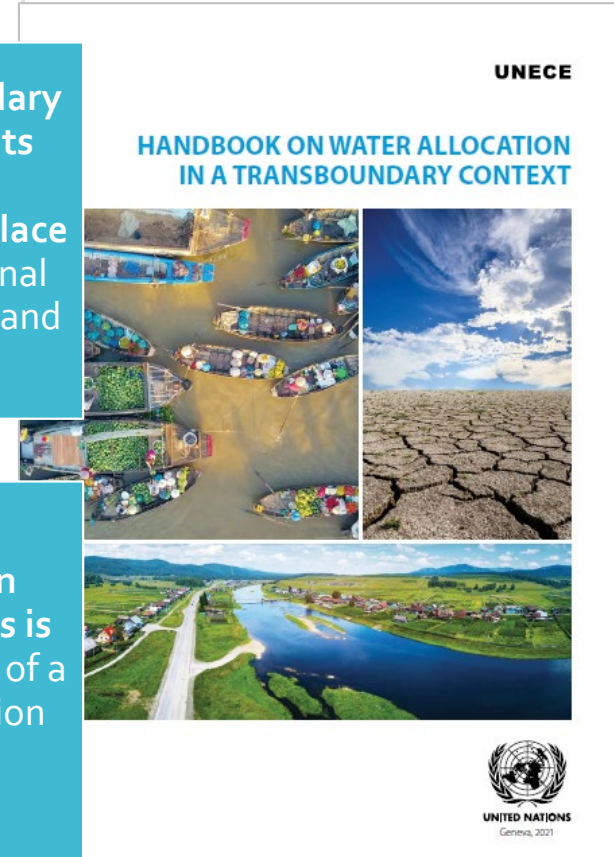
Growing practice in some transboundary basins reflects the prioritizing of human and ecological needs before allocating available water resources to other needs.

Implementation of transboundary water allocation arrangements relies on having effective legislation and institutions in place at the national and/or subnational levels, and may require revising and strengthening them.

To respond to changing conditions, including but not limited to climate variability and change, **transboundary water allocation agreements and other arrangements should be adaptable.**

A main limitation of allocation can be its narrow focus on water quantity, quality and timing, within a bounded spatial area. Thus, transboundary allocation should always be considered in conjunction with complementary broader approaches.

Negotiating water allocation arrangements and agreements is not a one-off exercise; it is part of a transboundary water cooperation process.



Regional activities: Central Asia

Regional Allocation process

Identified good regional practices and approaches that can assist Central Asian and neighbouring countries in the development of equitable and sustainable transboundary allocation mechanisms.

Key outcomes of the IWAC regional process for Central Asia, including a report detailing lessons learned and main recommendations, informed the development of the Handbook along with selected case studies from the region.

Central Asia regional workshop in November 2022, co-organized by IWAC, Finland, Switzerland, Water Convention

More than 45 participants, including officials from key ministries of the five Central Asian countries, as well as international and regional organizations

Improved understanding and knowledge of criteria, mechanisms, tools and best practices for water allocation in transboundary basins, and broader cross-sectoral opportunities (WFEE nexus)

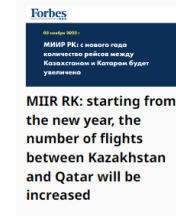
Outcome document with a set of key conclusions



Sharing water resources in Central Asia was discussed at a regional workshop

November 03, 2022

News > News of Kazakhstan



In Astana, at the Regional Seminar “International experience of transboundary water allocation and prospects for the development of cooperation on the joint use of water resources in Central Asia”, general approaches to the application of international experience in the distribution of water resources in transboundary basins and the development of cooperation on the joint use of water resources in Central Asia were discussed, transmits ortcom.kz .

The workshop brought together more than 45 participants, including officials from key ministries of the five Central Asian countries, as well as international experts.



Regional activities: Southern Africa

‘Workshop on Transboundary Water Allocation, WEF Nexus & Development of Agreements & other Arrangements: Supporting exchanges of lessons learned, good practices & practical tools’ (15-16 April 2024, Zambia)

Over 60 participants: States, River/lake basin orgs, NGOs, UN, Donor agencies, including high-level opening from the Minister

Designed to support states, river basin and lake organizations, and other relevant institutions in sharing challenges, problem-solving, and exchanging good practices on water allocation agreements and other transboundary arrangements.

Focus on science-policy interface between allocation modelling, WEF Nexus approach and developing flexible, ‘climate-proof’ and environmentally sustainable legal agreements and policies = Use of Convention Practical Guide on Agreements

Presenters and interactive group work sessions showcased up-to-date practices, novel approaches and showcased practical tools to support decision-makers, such as Convention Handbook on Allocation, Summary Handbook & Nexus Approach.

Group work “main messages” as outcomes will be applicable in Southern Africa and regions facing similar challenges such as Central Asia and Western Europe.



Challenges

- Extreme water stress is forcing countries, RBOs to **urgently seek practical solutions to complex challenges**
- Topic remains a **highly sensitive topic in many regions and stuck in historical volumetric discussions**
- **Gathering data to water modeling to developing/revising allocation agreements is often a fraught process**
- **Scientists and Engineers must be able to communicate better with Lawyers and Politicians and vice versa**
- **Groundwater continues to be missing** from many transboundary allocation planning processes

Lessons learned

- **Exchanges of experiences, within and between different regions, vital to build trust and capacity**
- As water scarcity increases under pressures of climate change, **allocation will rise higher on the water and political agenda of countries**
- Water allocation, like transboundary cooperation, **relies on long-term trust and capacity-building.**
- Build capacity to **move beyond perceptions of allocation as fixed quantitative amounts.**
- Need to **highlight broader holistic approaches (such as IWRM, WEFE nexus)**
- **Groundwater needs to have increased visibility** for effective conjunctive management of surface and groundwater via allocation in basins.
- **New, exciting projects are piloting innovative systems, models and emerging technologies; they should be showcased and supported where possible**

MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Mr Remy Kinna (remy.kinnak@un.org)



WEB unece.org/env/water



EMAIL water.convention@un.org



RESOURCES
www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html



WATER
CONVENTION



10th session

Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

23-25 OCTOBER 2024 | LJUBLJANA | SLOVENIA

Join us for the **largest and only international event** driving the **transboundary water cooperation agenda** at the global level.

High level segment "Our waters, our future: transboundary water cooperation to power climate resilience"

More than **500** participants expected, from about **80 countries** responsible for water, environment, foreign affairs and development cooperation, representatives of RBOs, IGOs, NGOs, IFIs and academia!

More info on MOP10 here:

https://unece.org/MOP10_Water_Convention

