The Global Water Cooperation Outlook Report

Draft 2, 11 Feb, 2022,
Håkan Tropp
Send comments to hakan.tropp@siwi.org

Title of main report: Global Outlook Report: The State and trends of Water Cooperation

N.B. We need to view this as a programme on water cooperation with many other potential outputs and outcomes. The main report will obviously be one very important key product around which we can build the programme, create results and build recognition and visibility for water cooperation around the world.

Background: Why is water cooperation important and how to work with it?
The below answers why a report series is warranted on water cooperation? why is it critical to focus on water cooperation? What are the development benefits of promoting water cooperation?

We fill a gap! The initiative will have a concise focus on assessing and developing knowledge on the quality of water cooperation at several scales and to assist governments and other stakeholders to seek cooperative solutions to shared water challenges.

It will assess the global state of water cooperation and seek to advance knowledge on what makes cooperation in water work and current trends and risks for cooperation taking root in the first place. Many other initiatives have rather focused on conflict as their main entry-point. While this has obvious merits to assess risks for and types of conflict (typically assessed between nation states as the analytical entity) and some of the measures that may applied, this initiative will have a concise focus on assessing cooperation and to identify and promote measures that not only avoid conflict but that directly can spur cooperation at various scales (basin, local, city, country, region etc.) between various stakeholders (water users, research, NGOs, etc.) and sectors (water, agriculture, energy, health, environment, recreation, etc.).

Why is it important to focus on water cooperation? What are the development benefits of focusing on water cooperation?

- Water cooperation is paramount if we are to achieve the SDG 2030 Agenda, Sendai Framework, Paris agreement, UNECE Water Convention, The Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International River Courses and more
- Outline the merits of focusing on water cooperation. So far, most other initiatives have focused on water conflict. ICWC on the other hand puts the spotlight on removing barriers to and incentivizing cooperation on shared water resources.

What is water cooperation and how can it be assessed and analyzed?

- Need to conceptualize and define our meaning of water cooperation and how it can be assessed.
- Need to develop a fairly simple but convincing and sound methodology of assessing the quality of water cooperation.
The work on water cooperation needs to be solidly anchored in an understanding of the state of the water resource around the world. The scarcity of the resource, water demands along with up-stream and down-stream dynamics provide important parts of understanding prospects for current and future water cooperation.

Water cooperation links to drivers of change: Demographic change; economic growth, and climate change impacts on water resources drives the supply of and demand for water. This will in turn drive issues of escalating water competition etc.

Political economy of water (water as political bargaining chip and part of the political economy) as additional analytical component.

What are the important elements of successful water cooperation? What makes cooperation work and under what conditions? How can improved cooperation and more coordinated approaches to cooperation be promoted?

- The initiative will contribute to increase our understanding of what makes cooperation work and development of policies, tools and methods for improved water cooperation. It will ground its work in current research and knowledge of water cooperation. It will further develop the policy domain of water cooperation. The initiative will work to bridge research and policy gaps.
- What are the current “principles” of water cooperation. For example, bilateral and multilateral water related agreements and conventions set out several principles on water cooperation. This initiative will widen the enquiry and look into water cooperation principles at sub-national levels. It also poses the question of possible relations and correlations between how countries’ behave in their sub-national and regional/international work related to water cooperation.

Purpose & Scope:
- Assess the status and trends of the quality of water cooperation around the world. In light of escalating water challenges to highlight the need for water cooperation as means to efficient, equitable and sustainable water development
- Assess global, regional and country policies, institutions, plans and actions and to what extent they incentivise and align to water cooperation (at different scales and across sectors)
- Develop targeted policy recommendations, Advise govts and other stakeholders

Target groups: The report targets a global audience of water decision-makers and practitioners (across sectors) in governments, private sector and civil society.

Periodic report: A main periodic report should be released on a periodic basis. It can range from 1-2 years. Case study/thematic reports can be published annually.

The report series will be developed in an iterative way. first steps include to conceptualize and unpack the concept of water cooperation and what we mean by it. Methodology will be developed on assessing the state of the quality of water cooperation. The work will build on what is already existing such as the UNECE monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and UN-Water assessment of IWRM (including some elements of cooperation).

As first report will make a first analysis of global water cooperation (most likely a bit more rudimentary at this stage) and then contain a deeper dive into water cooperation in some particular contexts. A first report can for example focus on the African context and with some deeper analysis of for example SADC region.

A set of outputs are expected related to development of; a) knowledge, b) capacity, and c) policy.

The following outputs are envisaged:
1. **Main report**: Global Outlook Report on the State and Trends of Water Cooperation
   a. Develop tool/methodology to assess and benchmark water quality cooperation
      (SIWI working papers expected but also methodological pieces that can be published in leading peer-reviewed research journals for quality assurance)
   b. Develop and resent data base (user friendly and accessible interface) on the quality of water cooperation. Establish set of indices that capture water cooperation.
   c. **Assessment and Mapping** of water cooperation hotspots (Global map/s that indicates current situations of water cooperation)
   d. Deep dive into geographical contexts, containing case studies along with deeper analysis.
   e. Develop a set of targeted (to various decision-makers and practitioners) policy recommendations that promote water cooperation

2. **Case studies** (best fit) on what makes water cooperation work. Case studies should reflect spread of scales, sectors and stakeholders across geographic regions.
   a. specific policy recommendations for a basin, country, city, etc to improve cooperation on shared water resources

3. **Thematic reports** that dig deeper in relevant cooperation topics. Some examples include the role of coordination across scales, sectors and stakeholders, the role of trust, the role of data & information gathering and sharing, capacity building, the role of water cooperation for economic development, etc.

   The generated knowledge, insights and lessons learned from outputs 1-3 provides excellent substantive basis to develop complementary programmatic activities that aims to support demand-driven support to governments and other stakeholders:

4. **Capacity development programming** specifically targeting cooperation on shared waters between and within countries

5. **Policy support** on water cooperation development to governments that includes:
   a. Assessing water cooperation at various scales (basin, country, city, etc.)
   b. Assisting to establish and to facilitate stakeholder platforms on shared waters
   c. Developing policy recommendations that facilitate water cooperation in very specific basin/country contexts.

**Envisaged Outcomes:**
- Advance knowledge on countries readiness for water cooperation and the mechanisms for improved cooperation on shared water resources
- Contribute to water cooperation being on the agenda among key water decision-makers globally and in countries
- Support governments and decision-makers on their demands to advance on water cooperation policies, planning, capacity and stakeholder platforms

**Develop a communications strategy**
There is a need to develop a communications strategy for the initiative. SIWI has an excellent opportunity to communicate progress and challenges on water cooperation on a regular basis.

Various international meetings and other opportunities will be continuously explored as opportunities to enhance and disseminate our work on water cooperation.
World Water Week and other international meetings and policy processes:
- The WWW serves as knowledge development and debate platform and launching pad for main flagship report, case studies and thematic reports.
- It should relate to and build policy dialogue and recommendation platforms at other events such as linked to HLPF-SD, UN MTR-Meeting 2023, World Water Forums, regional water weeks (Africa and Asia), and more.
- The WWDR 2023 will be on partnership and cooperation. We are contributing to it and we envisage clear synergies.

Resource Mobilization:
The initiative will require a plan for partnership development and resource mobilization. It is envisaged that the main report along with case studies, thematic reports etc will be co-produced by other organisations. Initially, we would like to keep it to rather a smaller no of partners, which can be expanded over time. To be able to keep this work going additional funding partners need to come onboard.

It is estimated that some SEK 3-4 Mn is required to launch a first version of the Report. It can be more or less depending on the ambitions. In terms of raising additional external resources, we should aim high and outline an ambitious programme that has the potential to set global and national agenda on water cooperation. The data base on water cooperation should be a get to place for actors wanting to learn more about the state of water cooperation, what works, what services do SIWI offer, etc.

ICWC: 1,2 MSEK
Other parts of SIWI: 1 MSEK
Other funders: 1-2 MSEK

**Partnership development:** Additional in-kind contributions expected from partners such as case studies and thematic reports. An aim is that partners want to associate themselves with the initiative and provide inputs on a voluntary basis (acknowledged in appropriate ways of course).

Outputs 4-5 will require additional funding to cater for specific country needs and demands. Resource mobilization strategy for the initiative will as much as possible combine knowledge development with support to countries (capacity development, policy development support, establishing platforms for stakeholder dialogue, etc).

### Annex 1. Examples of other initiatives

**Transboundary freshwater dispute database, OSU:**
https://transboundarywaters.science.oregonstate.edu/content/transboundary-freshwater-dispute-database

**Reporting under the Water Convention and SDG indicator 6.5.2, UNECE:**
https://unece.org/environmental-policy/water/transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting

**Geneva Water Hub:** Water insecurity is increasingly a cause of social and political instability threatening peace and security at all levels. The Geneva Water Hub aims at better understanding and preventing water-related tensions between competing uses, between public and private actors, and between political entities and countries. It aims to assist in preventing water conflicts at an early
The work on water cooperation needs to be solidly anchored in an understanding of the state of the water resource around the world. The scarcity of the resource along with up-stream and down-stream dynamics provide important parts of understanding prospects for current and future water cooperation.

**Some potential partners from the side water resources stats and modelling:** In our work with water cooperation we should collaborate with some water resources/hydrological databases to link the status of water resources with the state of water cooperation.

It will be really cool if we can contribute to scenario-based planning and adding water cooperation as a filter for how we can avoid certain scenarios and keep on track for the more desired scenarios we want to achieve.

- Water Scarcity Atlas by univ of Aalto and IIASA: [https://waterscarcityatlas.org/about-the-atlas/about-us/](https://waterscarcityatlas.org/about-the-atlas/about-us/) On this page you will also find other similar tools such as the water risk filter by WWF. FAO’s AquaStat is missing from it.

Other websites that provide information related to global water resources and water issues:

- **Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas:** Measuring, mapping and understanding water risks around the globe, maintained by the World Resources Institute
- **The Water Risk Filter:** Water maps and country data sets, maintained by the WWF
- **World Water Atlas:** Platform for sharing narratives about too much, too little, or too dirty water
- **The IUCN Water Knowledge platform**
- **UNESCO IHP’s “Global Network on Water and Development Information for Arid Lands”**
- **The State of the World’s Rivers**
- **Water and Climate Change:** WATCH project webpage on the water Cycle, including global maps of rainfall, freshwater, evaporation and soil moisture
- **Water Footprint Network**
- **Aquastat, FAO**

Possibly unmaintained:

- **GWSP Digital Water Atlas**, by the **Global Water System Project**

**Table.** Example of current assessment of water cooperation on transboundary waters (under the leadership of UNECE. Also UNESCO is engaged as UN-agency)
SDG 6.5.2 Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation

Target 6.5 is: “By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

Indicator 6.5.2 tracks the percentage of transboundary basin area within a country that has an operational arrangement for water cooperation. An “arrangement for water cooperation” is a bilateral or multilateral treaty, convention, agreement or other formal arrangement between riparian countries that provides a framework for cooperation on transboundary water management. Criteria for an “operational” arrangement are: the existence of a joint body, annual formal communication between riparian countries, joint or coordinated management plans or objectives and annual exchange of data and information.

Achieving the target on transboundary cooperation, with operational arrangements in place for all the world’s transboundary basins plays a crucial role in supporting wider regional integration, peace and sustainable development.

High levels of engagement. In 2020, 130 out of 153 countries sharing transboundary waters submitted national reports on the benefits of transboundary cooperation. Such high levels of engagement, and the process underpinning it, demonstrates the importance given to transboundary water cooperation, as well as the value of communication and transparency in advancing it.

Arrangements for water cooperation. In 2017, on average, 59% of countries’ transboundary basin area had an operational arrangement for water cooperation (based on data from 67 countries). The average value is higher for transboundary river and lakes basins (63 percent) but lower for transboundary aquifers (48 percent). Additional cooperation arrangements needed. Only [17] countries out of 153 have all their transboundary basins covered by cooperation arrangements.

An additional 20 countries have high levels of cooperation. Levels of cooperation are particularly high in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Europe and North America. Many rivers, lakes and aquifers are lacking operational arrangements for water cooperation especially in Latin America, North Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia, and Eastern and South-eastern Asia. Where operational arrangements are lacking, identifying and advancing key factors of operationality, such as regular data exchange, can result in ‘quick wins’ that accelerate target achievement with sometimes minimal efforts.

Source: Draft SDG 6 Progress Update 2021, UN-WATER.