



Institutional Arrangements and Participation



Summary

Institutional Arrangements and Participation is one of the four pillars of IWRM. A coordinated and participatory institutional framework is required for achieving sustainable water resources management. The Tools in this section discuss institutional responsibilities, mechanisms for enhanced stakeholder participation, as well as frameworks and strategies to improve coordination and capacity building in the water sector.

Coordination and Participation within Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements refer to the network of stakeholders that operate within a specific governance domain and, which are linked through sharing expertise, data, systems and tools, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms (Fig. 1). Well-functioning institutional arrangements should be flexible, sustainable, and must allow continuous and consistent flow of information, facilitate the engagement of national and subnational expertise, and provide coordination between institutions ([UNFCCC,2020](#) and ([Hassenforder and Barone, 2018](#)).

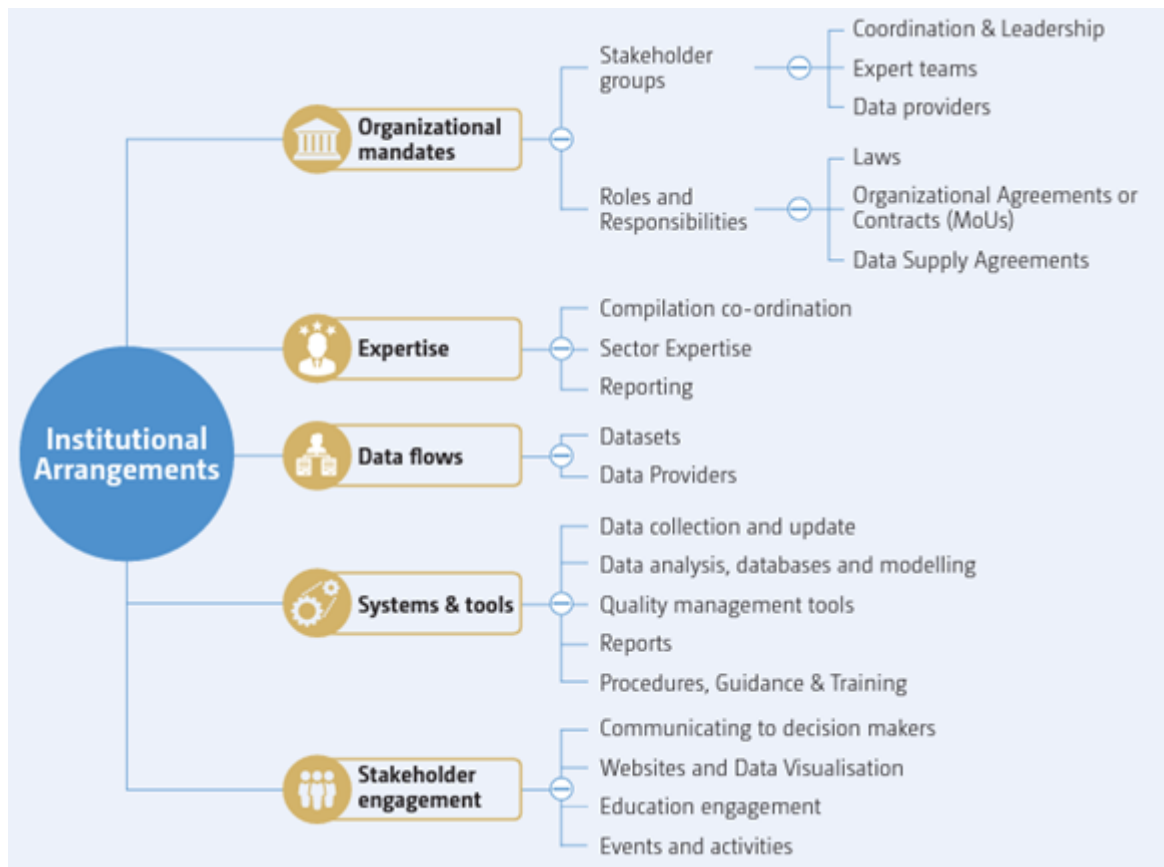


Figure 1. Components of Institutional Arrangements. Source: (UNFCCC,2020)

Coordinated governance arrangements for water entails that institutions should work together towards balancing the various demands for water and ensure that water is managed in ways that maximise socio-economic benefits without hampering the environmental sustainability. This is a hard task as water management responsibilities typically fall within the mandate of many entities including ministries (e.g., environment, transport, forestry, health, finance, agriculture, etc.) not to mention sub-national authorities and the various non-state actors who also play a role in water-related decision-making processes. Based on the latest available data, approximately half of the countries still do not have formal mechanism for ensuring cross-sectoral coordination at national level (Fig 2). One of the common ways to ensure national coordination has been to set up a national apex body ([Tool B3.02](#)) for water, which brings together the aforementioned actors to the table for joint planning and decision-making.

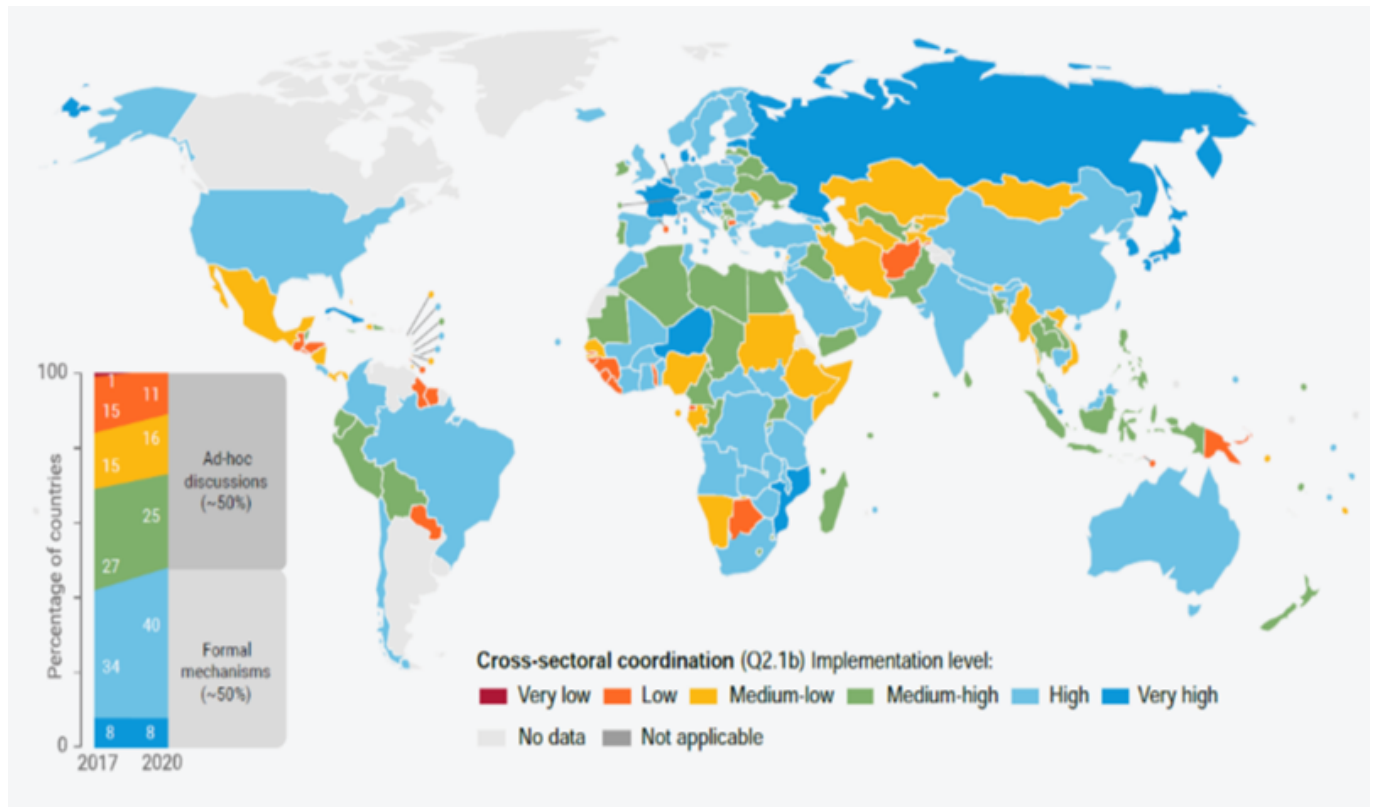


Figure 2. Cross-sectoral Coordination Implementation at the National Level. Source: (UN-Water, 2021)

Participation is also one of the key dimensions of institutional arrangements geared towards IWRM. As highlighted by Dublin Principle 2, there is a need to involve users and stakeholders from all sectors and across levels in water management. Stakeholder engagement can be leveraged through a number of mechanisms such as information gathering and sharing networks (Tool B4.01), training water professionals (Tool B4.02), and developing communities of practice (Tool B4.03). The participation of women and girls (Tools B5) within institutional arrangements for water governance is likewise supported by Dublin Principle 3. Conducting Gender Analyses (Tool B5.01) and developing Gender Indicators (Tool B5.02) are essential first steps in ensuring meaningful gender and social inclusion as part of water governance frameworks.

Key Elements and Practices to Improve Institutional Coordination and Participation

It is important to remember that there is no blueprint valid for enhancing institutional coordination and participation. However, there are some central tenants or elements which can aid in fostering improvements in the functionality of institutions within the water sector (UN-Water, 2021):

- **Identifying Overlaps and Political Bottlenecks:** Water is a highly competitive political arena with several bodies trying to show their relevance by protecting their mandate relating to water resources management. This, therefore, makes it sometimes difficult to create institutional mechanisms for coordination. A multi-stakeholder mapping (Tool B3.05) to identify key institutions, their interests, and their role related to water resources management is a first step in trying to understand the coordination bottlenecks. Mapping the degree of connectivity between water resource

coordination mechanisms and their actual implementation can also help.

- **Assessing Capacities and Continuous Development (Tools B4):** Building capacities within institutions can translate into increased performance. IWRM is a relatively new philosophy, and it requires much awareness to grasp its core concepts and principles. Understanding the current knowledge and capacities of stakeholders, particularly those present in water-related institutions, is an important first step in identifying gaps in capacities. This is crucial to understanding how stakeholders value water, if there is a need for dedicated training programmes for awareness building and to what extent and scale they should be developed.
- **Promoting Information and Knowledge Management:** A major byproduct of effective institutional coordination is the ability to coordinate efforts in the collection of appropriate data and ensure interested, and relevant parties have access to this data. Practitioners should consider the implementation of online information systems such as National Water Information Systems ([Tool B4.01](#)). Take, for example, the [USGS National Water Information System](#) and systems of this nature can be jointly managed by various water-related agencies. Data-sharing protocols can also support this practice. Protocols can create a guide to harmonisation and standardisation in data management. Practitioners should also encourage the use of broad data sources, for example, from the private sector, NGOs, CSOs, and academics. This can create a space for more holistic and public participation.
- **Management Instruments for Data-Driven Actions:** The use of management instruments is critical for institutional coordination and participation of all stakeholders. Institutions require timely and up-to-date data to ensure informed decisions are made. Using the right mix of management instruments can refine their understanding of the issues at stake. For instance, the use of risk and vulnerability ([Tool C1.01](#) and [Tool C2.02](#)) and Ecosystem Assessments ([Tool C1.05](#)) can create a baseline awareness which then guides appropriate actions and solutions by the institutions present.
- **Strengthening Cooperation and Arrangements Across Boundaries:** The water sector has been experiencing conflicting socio-economic demands, increased environmental pressures, and poor governance of water. These issues are accentuated by the diversity of the stakeholders present within the water space, its transboundary nature, and the inherent lack of coordination that is often present, calling for an improvement in this regard ([Lieberherr and Ingold, 2019](#)). Participating and carrying out mandates in regional frameworks and international conventions such as the [Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourse and International Lakes \(Water Convention\)](#) and the [United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses](#) can assist in understanding, streamlining water-related commitments, and goals across borders.

Section Overview

To ensure adequate institutional arrangements and participation at all levels, a variety of strategies can be utilised. This section is therefore organised into five (5) sub-sections as follows and builds, in-depth, on various aspects of these arrangements and forms of participation as described above.

- **Regulation and Compliance (Tools B1):** highlights the common roots of regulatory failures and remedies to overcome, as well as some key building blocks to ensure effectiveness in regulatory compliance.

- **Water Services** ([Tools B2](#)): provides an overview of the institutional arrangements that are related to delivering water services. It brings insight into the different service delivery models with emphasis on public, private, and community-managed water utilities.
- **Coordination** ([Tools B3](#)): delivers an understanding of coordination in the water sector, key principles, roles, and functions. Barriers to effective coordination and partnership and building blocks for fostering coordination within the sector is also discussed.
- **Capacity Development** ([Tools B4](#)): highlights the conceptual shift towards capacity development, its key attributes, levels of knowledge and the capacity development cycle, ways to evaluate progress, and its contextualisation.
- **Addressing Gender Inclusion** ([Tools B5](#)): produces insight into the need for and addresses gender inclusion in the water sector. An understanding of the gender integration continuum and gender transformative approaches are also provided.

Thematic Tagging

Water services

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