What is Water Governance?

UNDP defines water governance as:

The range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage (i) water resources, (ii) water services, at different levels of society.

- The water crisis is essentially a crisis of governance
- Governance in water is about how we as individuals and as a society use and allocate a common and shared resource
- It’s about politics, power and decision-making on who gets what water, when and how!
- Governance can be seen as the quality of institutions and processes of interactions and relations
Why Water and Governance? Four Dimensions of Improved Water Governance

Water governance realities

- Water moves around the landscape (Over, on and under land)
- Seasonal variations of water quantity – Availability uncertain. Increasing uncertainty due to climate change!
- Multiple water uses – Bundles of rights (irrigation, hydropower, households, religion, tourism, ecosystem services, land etc)
- Legal pluralism – formal water rights/customary water rights
- International trans-boundary water dimensions
- Water supply acknowledged as a human right
- Capital intensive – Large complex infra-structure projects
- Fragmented institutions
- Water services is a natural monopoly
State-centric & Polycentric Governance Architectures

Old Governance – State-centric

• Focus on government and bureaucracy
• Political power monopoly

Typical Water Reform Elements:
- Decentralization
- Participation
- Privatization, PPPs
- Integration, IWRM
- Basin Wide Mgmt
- Clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities

New Governance - Polycentric

• Increasing roles for civil society and markets
• Emphasis on a diversity of actors

Polycentric challenges:
- Formal and informal water rights clashing
- Lack of financing and human capacity
- Governance remain weak
- Weak implementation

Making Water reform Work -- Need for researching and applying governance measures on:
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Trust
- Anti-corruption
- Vested interests
- More......

Corruption an over-looked governance dimension

Corruption: Water development dimensions

- Poverty reduction / development in jeopardy ---- Corruption is increasing investment risks and makes it harder to raise much required financial resources for water services and IWRM
- Environmental sustainability compromised --- over-abstraction of water and water pollution leading to eco-system and livelihood losses,
- Social equity is at risk due to skewed water resources allocation and unequal distribution of water services
- Makes it more difficult to meet challenges of climate change, food and water security
- Impacts of corruption are much broader than on economic growth and service delivery. It undermines social capital, human and democratic rights and the rule of law
Water Governance: Demystify and Apply!

- **Critical for development**: Governance is critical for long-term and day-to-day water management and critical for citizens/water consumers to exercise their rights - partnership formation, networking, investments, negotiation and mediation.

- **Too generic**: Governance tends to be treated in a too generic way. It is used in a rather loose way in many development circles without providing it with meaningful content and guidance of how it can be applied.

- **Increase application**: The application of improved governance should be intensified and more systematic in water – Water Governance Assessment as a tool for increased application.

- **Strengthen governance – technology nexus**: The water sector is to a large extent driven by technocrats with a strong focus on water supply driven infrastructure development – governance poorly understood – Need more multi-disciplinary approaches!

---

Water Governance: Demystify and Apply!

- **Strengthen research and application on governance and finance nexus**: Improved governance is important for economic growth and for attracting public and private investments.

- **Strengthen research and application on water governance and security**: Improved governance is critical for water, food and energy security within and between countries.

- **Strengthen research and application on critical governance elements**: Accountability (social, political, administrative and vertical/horizontal), Access to information (transparency), anti-corruption, Trust-building.......

---