

**UN-WATER TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS THEMATIC PRIORITY AREA**  
Co-coordinated by UNESCO & UNECE

**CONCEPT NOTE**  
**GOOD PRACTICES IN TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION**

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**Rationale & Background**

There are approximately 276 transboundary river basins on the planet with a geographical area corresponding to almost half of the earth's surface and 60% of freshwater supplies. Almost three billion people in 145 countries live in this area<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, two billion people rely on groundwater resources, of which approximately 273 are transboundary aquifer systems<sup>2</sup>, a number growing based on further investigations. These physical realities, together with the need for a sustainable development and equitable and reasonable use of these transboundary resources, create the conditions necessary for cooperation between people, groups, and states. History shows that water can be an instrumental modality in changing a potentially conflictive situation to one of cooperation<sup>3</sup>. However, the challenges of climate change, population growth, economic development, and urbanization are straining the world's water resources in new, less predictable ways. These challenges exacerbate existing political tensions around transboundary water management that arise due to countries' competing requirements for development.

UN-Water members and partners as well as Member States dealing with these issues require a forum to voice issues and pose solutions. The Transboundary Waters Thematic Priority Area (TW-TPA) serves as UN-Water's clearinghouse for information exchange to share experiences and lessons learned that relate to transboundary water issues. Following the mapping exercise that identified current activities in the area, the next step for the TW-TPA is the collection, analysis, and dissemination of good practices in transboundary water cooperation. The sharing of such good practices will provide Member States acute information and support for the sound management of their transboundary waters and will assist them in identifying and using factors which enable cooperative interactions around water. Moreover, the good practices will support UN-Water members and partners in planning, designing and implementing their activities in the area of transboundary water cooperation.

The collection of good practices will also serve as an input for, and will be launched on the occasion of, the 2013 UN International Year of Water Cooperation (A/RES/65/154)<sup>4</sup>. In August 2011, UN-Water appointed UNESCO to lead preparations for both the 2013 International Year and the World Water Day on Water Cooperation, in cooperation with UNECE, and with the support of UNDESA, UNW-DPC, UNW-DPAC and other UN-Water agencies and programmes. The objective of

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<sup>1</sup> Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database, Department of Geosciences, Oregon State University (2008)

<sup>2</sup> ISARM (2009)

<sup>3</sup> See generally, AARON WOLF, ANNIKA KRAMER, ALEXANDER CARIUS, & GEOFFREY DABELKO, *Managing Water Conflict and Cooperation*. Chapter 5 in *State of the World: Redefining Global Security*. Washington D.C.: Worldwatch Institute. (2005); AARON WOLF, SHIRA YOFFE, & MARK GIORDANO, *International Waters: Indicators for Identifying Basins at Risk*, UNESCO-IHP; LUCIA DE STAEFANO, LYNETTE DE SILVA, PARIS EDWARDS & AARON WOLF, *Updating the International Water Events Database*, UNESCO-PCCP, Side publications Series, Dialogue Paper.

<sup>4</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/521/78/PDF/N1052178.pdf?OpenElement>

the 2013 IYWC and WWD is to raise awareness on both the potential for increased cooperation and the challenges facing water management in the context of greater demand for water access, allocation, and services. The collection and publication of the TW-TPA's good practices in transboundary water management will, therefore, be a most timely and beneficial contribution to these Year and Day.

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## **Aim**

The overall objective of this activity is to identify and disseminate good practices related to cooperation on transboundary waters, and thereby help anticipate, prevent and resolve water conflicts, as well as achieve sustainable development and equitable and reasonable use of transboundary waters.

This will be done through the following operational objectives.

- Collection of samples of good practices in transboundary water management;
- Identification of factors which foster/create cooperation around the management of transboundary waters, and the benefits of cooperation, based on the good practices identified;
- Sharing of experience and information related to the management of transboundary waters.

The above is in line with the guidelines set out by UN-Water in its work programme for the thematic area relating to Transboundary Waters. The expected outcomes are listed<sup>5</sup> as:

- a more consolidated and systematic coverage of issues of strategic and long-term importance for the global water agenda;
- substantive contribution to global processes and meetings and the production of communication and advocacy materials;
- regular reporting to UN-Water members and partners on noteworthy developments within respective priority areas;
- Enhancement of the knowledge of UN-Water members and partners as well as Member States, related to sound and sustainable transboundary management by disseminating these good practices.

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## **Impact/Beneficiaries**

The collection, analysis, and dissemination of good practices in transboundary water management are intended to assist Member States in jointly managing their transboundary waters. The TW-TPA provides the forum to share lessons learned so Member States may adapt past experience to the specifics of their situation.

Secondly, the partners and members of UN-Water are actively working in transboundary water management. They may be in advisory or implementation roles. Both roles require the provision of solutions or options to Member States. Good practices can serve to meet these requirements or provide elements of a solution.

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<sup>5</sup> Per UN-Water Work Programme 2010-2011

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## Inputs

This exercise will gather data on good practices. Good practices implies that there is not a single method for managing transboundary water issues, but rather a number of factors and issues that can help foster cooperation and better relationships between users of transboundary water resources. This is in line with the different physical, political, and socio-economic characteristics of river, lake basins or aquifer systems. One commonality is the presence of 'enabling factors', which, upon identification, can be used to create opportunities for cooperation. Enabling factors can be, *inter alia*, shared projects, common institutions and legal frameworks at various levels, informal legal and institutional cooperative mechanisms, joint financing, cooperation on technical issues, joint monitoring and data exchange. It is the identification, recognition, better awareness and understanding, and use of these factors (and how they support one another), as opportunities to foster or create cooperation, which constitute the good practice. What constitutes the good practice is the exploitation and design of an enabling factor. As such, elements of timing, design, and partnering become critical. Therefore, the good practice derives from the ability to recognize and maximize opportunities for or benefits of cooperation.

In order to be practical there must be a process to facilitate the acquisition of the data, as the intent is to gather specific details to move beyond negotiation theory. Also, where there are specifics it should be possible to transpose situations for different contexts. The basic steps are:

- Description of the incentives for cooperation, conflict/dispute, or the limits/lack of cooperation as regards water, including a description of the overall context of cooperation (riparians, whether state or non-state actors, relevant political, social, economic, legal and institutional aspects, including existing water treaties and institutions).
- Description of the good practice's focus: there are topics of key concern to UN-Water members and partners (see below). Special efforts should be extended to obtain and analyze the data in these key focus areas. Description of the enabling factor(s) (e.g. financing, joint-project, institutional/legal arrangement, non-water integration/development goals).
- Description of the process that led to the adoption/establishment of the enabling factor to facilitate cooperation. How was the factor identified? What was needed to establish it?
- Description of the benefits of cooperation/the cooperative situation that evolved including institutional, legal (including better understanding of the content and role of international water law and instruments), economic, or other outcomes, including remaining challenges that the practice could not address (yet).

Key focus areas (e.g.):

- climate change adaptation and mitigation in transboundary basins
- roles of non-state actors
- water quality
- transboundary aquifers, especially involving delineation and management
- cooperation over transboundary ecosystems and freshwater protected areas
- monitoring and exchange of data
- institutional and legal issues, including means and strategies for improving the understanding and awareness of international water law and building the capacity of states to apply it as an enabling factor
- water-energy-food nexus

- impacts on the basin/aquifer system as a whole as well as on the coastal/marine areas

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## Outputs

The principal output of the exercise will be short fact sheets of maximum two pages. The facts sheets will provide data in different formats according to the information received in the input forms, following a common template. A fact sheet may focus on a single situation or river, lake basin or aquifer system where there is detailed information (*i.e.*, a short case study). A fact sheet may also focus on a specific enabling factor or physical characteristic of a transboundary water body. In the first round, a total of 20-30 good practice examples will be collected. This first set may be complemented with additional good practice examples in future years.

Fact sheets will:

- Contain a description of the physical characteristics of the water body, the situation prior to cooperation, and parties involved, and highlight focal issues, such as climate change, involvement of non-state stakeholders, and transboundary aquifers.
- Analyze the factors which enabled cooperation, how these factors interact with one another and have been leveraged to create/foster cooperation, and the final outcome.
- Provide information on the benefits of cooperation, if available even in a quantitative way.
- Mainly provide the targeted audiences with information on the identification and use of enabling factors. This part of the fact sheet will move beyond the simple identification of enabling factors, and into how the factors were used and whether they reinforced one another, to create/foster cooperation. It is the critical and analytical part of the exercise. Some experiences, or elements thereof, will be used as learning models while others may be transposed from one setting to another when possible.

In accordance with the terms of reference for UN-Water, the principal output is the communication of thematically important information to Member States and partners. This information will contribute to improved coherence of global and regional activities within the UN system. As such, once information is received, it will be compiled and processed. It will then be presented (in the form of fact sheets) to allow for use and learning in different contexts. Fact sheets will be accessible through the UN-Water website, as well as the websites of the TW-TPA members and partners willing to do so. In addition, a printed report will be prepared and distributed.

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## Process

Following the finalization of this concept note, based on comments by all TPA members, a call for proposals for good practice examples will be launched among TPA members and partners in September 2012. Each TPA member and partner will be invited to call its close network to contribute to the exercise. Other UN-Water members, partners and programmes will be invited to contribute as well. All submitted examples will be considered, compared and evaluated. A selection of the most pertinent ones will be made on the basis of a number of factors: criteria such as (but not limited to) the fair geographical distribution, thematic and institutional

balance, relevance of the example to theme, and quality of data submitted, will be taken into account. Criteria for good practices' selection, developed by FAO, will be used as well for this exercise<sup>6</sup>. Such selection will be done, as much as possible, in consultation with the TPA. The selected good practices will then be prepared by the end of 2012 and published beginning of 2013.

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### Proposed Timeline

Completion Date: 31 December 2012

1. Review concept note & forms	August 2012
2. Publish concept note & forms	September/October 2012
3. Receive proposals for good practices to be included	9 November 2012
4. Compile, analyze and select the good practices submitted	November 2012
5. Submit longer versions of selected good practices	30 November 2012
6. Compile and analyze longer versions submitted	30 December 2012
7. Internal review of analysis	31 January 2013
8. Publish	Beginning of 2013
9. Continue to solicit information and update	Continuous

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### Contacts

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/knowledge/goodpractices/gp-definitionsandcriteria/criteriaforgoodpractice/en/>.

According to these criteria, a good practice can be identified as such if it is:

- 1) Effective and successful - A 'good practice' has proven its strategic relevance. It has either been viable in a certain project over time or has produced tangible results as the most effective way in achieving a specific objective.
- 2) Sustainable - A 'good practice' meets current needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, without compromising the ability to address future needs. In this, it contributes to all three of the following mutually reinforcing pillars: economic development, social development, and environmental protection.
- 3) Environmentally sound - 'Good practice' should be environmentally sound by protecting the environment and treating it carefully.
- 4) Socially acceptable - A 'good practice' can only help people if it's socially acceptable and culturally sensitive. It should not offend anyone or disturb social attitudes, and has to fit into the cultural background, otherwise nobody will use it.
- 5) Technically practicable - Technical practicability is the basis of a 'good practice' so people can actually use and apply them in their everyday life without any problems.
- 6) Economically efficient - A 'good practice' has to be economically efficient, on the one hand to make it worth changing your established habits, on the other hand to be an affordable alternative to older practices.
- 7) Inherently participatory - Community, stakeholders and partners are supposed to be collaborators in a project at every stage of it. Thus, participative approaches are meant to generate a sense of ownership of decisions and actions.
- 8) Replicable and adaptable - A 'good practice' has to have the potential for replication. It constitutes a source of information for project dissemination and implementation, so it needs to be adaptable to similar objectives in varying situations.

## Good Practices in Transboundary Water Cooperation Input Form

*For the pre-selection stage it is sufficient to indicate a few lines under each heading. Subsequently, if your good practice example is selected for inclusion in the final publication, you will be asked for more details (4 pages maximum).*

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Organization:</b>	
<b>Title of Good Practice:</b>	
<b>Transboundary Waters:</b>	
E.g. basin or aquifer characteristics, geographic location, riparians.	
<b>Thematic focus of the good practice:</b>	
There can be more than one thematic focus per good practice.	
<input type="checkbox"/> legal and institutional aspects <input type="checkbox"/> climate change adaptation and mitigation <input type="checkbox"/> involvement of non-state stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input type="checkbox"/> transboundary aquifers <input type="checkbox"/> cooperation over transboundary ecosystems and freshwater protected areas <input type="checkbox"/> monitoring and assessment <input type="checkbox"/> exchange of data <input type="checkbox"/> water-energy-food nexus <input type="checkbox"/> impacts on the coastal/marine areas <input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Provide information on the objectives and key issues addressed by the good practice:

**Description of existing situation and state of cooperation:**

Provide an outline of the relevant details. These can include: e.g.

- the parties involved
- the physical environment such as quality or quantity
- project details
- funding sources
- historical factors
- power imbalances
- local/regional context
- social/cultural, political and economic aspects
- applicable water-related treaties and customary law
- existing basin organizations and other relevant institutions/cooperative mechanisms

**Description of the process and framework for cooperation (enabling factor):**

Provide detailed information on what factors enabled cooperation in the joint management of the concerned water body, and how these factors were identified and used, and interacted with one another. This could relate to the anticipation, avoidance, or resolution of a conflictive situation. It could also be a situation without conflict. Some factors are financing, legal arrangements, or joint development agendas. As much as possible include information on: e.g. difficulties encountered, unintended consequences, lessons learnt, need for further improvement.

**Success components of the good practice with regard to its capacity in enabling and enhancing water cooperation, or in anticipating, preventing, solving a conflictive situation (benefits of cooperation and their quantification, if available):**

Please provide information on the extent to which this good practice and its enabling factors are/can be :

effective and successful:

sustainable:

environmentally sound:

socially acceptable:

technically applicable:

economically efficient:

inherently participatory:

replicable and adaptable

**References, websites, photos etc.:**