World Water Data Initiative



Recommendations

Headline Recommendation

Commit to making evidence-based decisions about water, and cooperate to strengthen water data, such as through the HLPW World Water Data Initiative.

Detailed Recommendations

• Develop national water data policies and systems, using open data approaches wherever possible, with support from the HLPW World Water Data Initiative.

Challenges

Inadequate water data limits national and community capacity to make informed decisions on managing this resource, necessary for accelerating the achievement of SDG 6.

This inadequacy is the result of absent or outdated policies on how water data should be collected, stored, disseminated and used, and the costs and complexity of managing water data in accordance with such policies.

In many countries, failure to maintain or replace hydro-meteorological equipment results in lack of adequate water data. There is scope for innovation in technology and new practices and methods to increase access to data at reduced cost and complexity.

Any response to these challenges will require leadership and engagement by governments at all levels, and the support of multilateral agencies, beyond the life of the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW).

Principles for approaching the problems

To respond to the above challenges, an ambitious framework has been developed for global adoption under the title 'World Water Data Initiative'. This initiative has three Pillars of reform: policy, harmonization, and innovation, with a common objective to improve cost effective access to and use of water and hydro-meteorological data by governments, societies, and the private sector.

The Initiative delivers a combination of guidance materials, principles to support harmonization and ideas for innovation.

In order to contain its scope and allow for practical implementation, the HLPW's World Water Data Initiative mainly focuses on data for water itself, rather than broader information needed for decision making, such as how water is used or the impacts of water use. These may typically involve a wider range of government and inter-government agencies and processes and may be the subject of other reforms.

Contributions of the Panel

The HLPW's Action Plan (September 2016) identified improvements in 'water data', along with 'water governance' and 'valuing water', as an underpinning requirement for making progress in all of the thematic areas required for achieving SDG6.

The Action Plan proposed six 'priority actions', covering political messaging on the importance of water data, integration and standardization, use of earth observation data, an innovation challenge, public outreach, and disaster-related data.

The HLPW's World Water Data Initiative Roadmap (February 2017) proposed solutions to address to these challenges, as described above, including a forward workplan.

Under the auspices of the Panel, three technical workshops involving key relevant multilateral and expert agencies were convened to review the Roadmap (January 2017, convened by the World Bank) and identifying approaches for implementation (July and September 2017, convened by Australia).

Good Practice Guidelines for Water Data Policy and management have been prepared by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and published by the Bureau and by the World Meteorological Organisation in February 2018. To help define where the most benefit would derive from harmonization effort, the World Bank is preparing a reference document on water accounting and assessment including available accounting tools and guidance on both selecting the right tool and accessing the data needed to undertake them.

An innovation challenge on water data for farmers has been launched, and is being managed by the Global Innovation Fund.

The World Water Data Initiative was presented and promoted on behalf of the HLPW to the global water community at several major international water events in 2017.

Findings and conclusions

The next steps with the World Water Data Initiative are:

- (i) Disseminating guidance material for use by any country seeking to improve its water data policies.
- (ii) Settling ongoing leadership responsibilities on water data matters among multilateral agencies.
- (iii) Securing funding support for new innovations in water data through the Water Innovation Engine (explained in the section "11. Water Innovation Engine").