



Enabling Environment

The Enabling Environment is one of the four pillars of IWRM. It consists of the various policies, legislative, and planning instruments that provide the operational basis for implementing IWRM. The Tools in this Section introduce the range of water-related regulatory instruments and their respective role in setting up a conducive environment for improving the state of water resources management.

Defining the Enabling Environment

The enabling environment comprises the various regulatory instruments that provide a foundation for implementing IWRM. Regulatory instruments include the national, provincial, and local policies, and legislation which make up the “rules of the game”. It allows and enables all stakeholders to actively play their respective roles in the development and management of water resources, and it includes aspects of information sharing and capacity building (GWP, 2000). The enabling environment establishes the rights of all water stakeholders, whether it be public or private individuals, towards ensuring environmental quality and management. A strong enabling environment provides the water sector with a sturdy foundation with established priorities as pillars and the mechanisms to aid in improving water governance. This is so that social, economic, and environmental goals are equally achieved.

Differentiating between Policies, Plans, and Laws

Policies, plans, and laws are regulatory instruments that serve different purposes but are closely interlinked when creating a conducive enabling environment for IWRM planning and implementation. For instance, if one regulatory instrument is removed or amended (e.g., a national water policy), it can create contradictions with other instruments or make them obsolete (e.g., water and sanitation plan). This creates performance inefficiencies, as the policy will now be devoid of strategic guidance and action plans within specific sectors and sub-sectors. Overall, this would lead to an ineffective environment wherein the quality of the management is decreased. To understand the distinctions, the following definitions and attributes are provided in **Figure 1**.

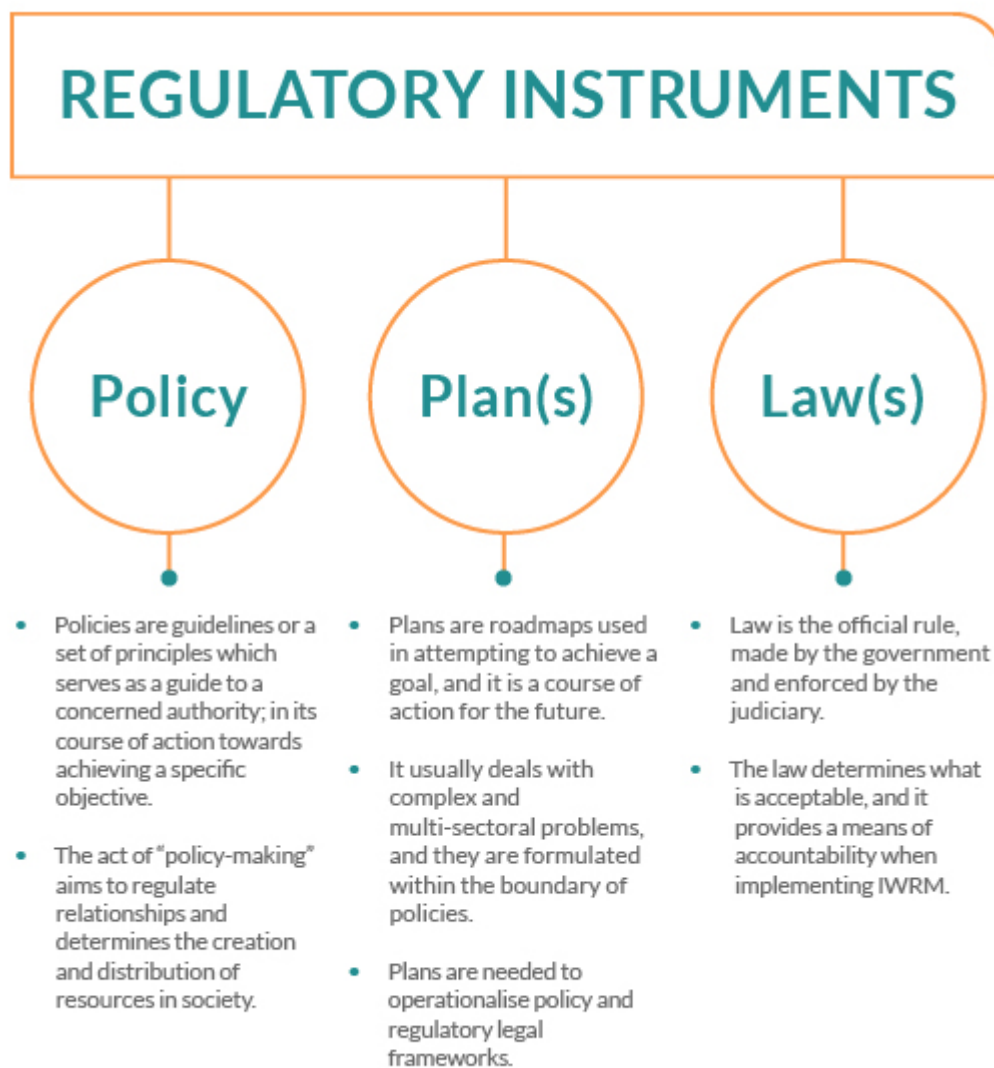


Figure 1. Regulatory Instruments for Creating an Effective Enabling Environment. **Source:** Adapted from: [Stanford Law School, 2015](#); [Yalmanov, 2021](#); and [UN-Water, 2021](#)

Progress and Barriers

In 2020, a total of 171 countries reported their progress of IWRM implementation based on the SDG indicator 6.5.1. Generally, the globe is not on track to achieve [Target 6.5](#), and it is reported that the rate of IWRM implementation needs to be doubled if we are to meet the 2030 goal. With regards to the enabling environment, the global rate of implementation is 57% (2020), indicating that countries score “medium-high” on average relating to their regulatory capacities to implement IWRM (Figure 2) ([UN-Water, 2021](#)). Sub-Saharan and South Asian countries are among those that have the lowest scores regarding the enabling environment for IWRM.

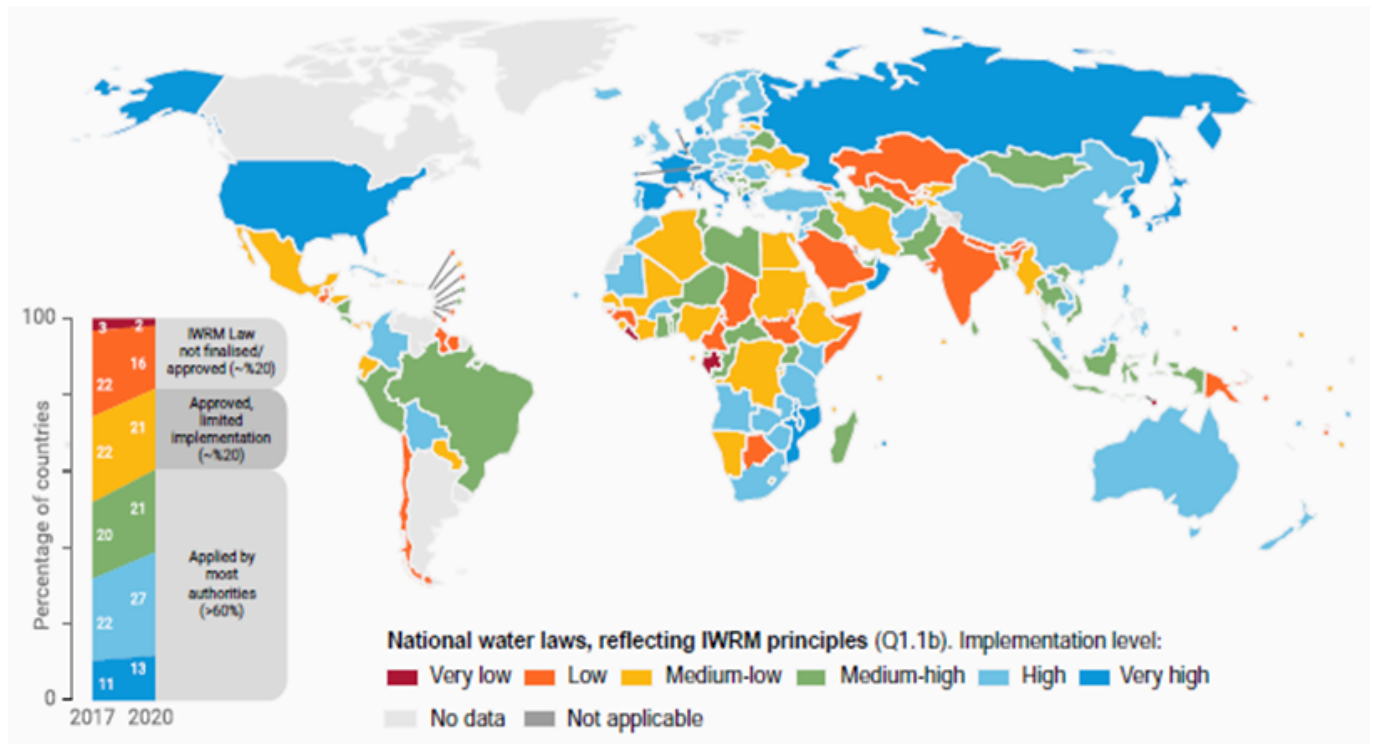


Figure 2. National Law Development and Implementation Reflecting IWRM Principles.
Source: [UN-Water, 2021](#)

One of the major challenges that remains is the lack of coordination and institutional collaboration. The alignment of IWRM-related policies between water-related sectors, at various levels (i.e., national, sub-national, and basin levels) is also often missing. Outdated and fragmented legal frameworks are likewise key identified barriers ([UN-Water, 2021](#)). In this sense, there is a need to accelerate progress on the coordination of governance arrangements across sectors and within the water community; in terms of institutional policy frameworks and the coordination between national and basin levels ([Tools B](#)).

Section Overview

To address outdated and ineffective legal frameworks and other inadequacies, we must build robust and updated water-related policies, legislation, and plans. The Tools in this Section are therefore organised as follows:

- **Policies** ([A1 Tools](#)): connects the need for an IWRM approach for water resource policy planning, the need for participatory and demand-driven sustainable development practices, and the need for effective laws and legislation.
- **Legal Frameworks** ([A2 Tools](#)): highlights the role of water legislation as an instrument for monitoring and managing water allocation and the protection of relevant water rights.
- **Planning for IWRM Implementation** ([A3 Tools](#)): covers the various elements related to IWRM planning, including how to align national IWRM plans together with basin plans and other sectoral plans.

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