

3A	
TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT	Principle 9. Integrity and transparency
Target group / Relevant stakeholder: National Policy-Makers, Municipal Governments, Regulators, Urban Water Utilities, Medium Water Utilities, Rural Service Providers, Watershed or River Basin Organisations, User Groups, Networks or Platforms, and/or Private Sector	
DESCRIPTION	
Mainstream integrity and transparency practices across water policies, water institutions and water governance frameworks for greater accountability and trust in decision-making (OECD, 2024, 46).	
EXPECTED RESULTS	
<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and institutional frameworks hold decision-makers and stakeholders accountable, such as the right to information and independent authorities to investigate water related issues and law enforcement (OECD, 2024, 46). • Norms, codes of conduct or charters on integrity and transparency in national or local contexts and monitoring their implementation (OECD, 2024, 46). • Clear accountability and control mechanisms for transparent water policy making and implementation (OECD, 2024, 46). • Diagnosis and mapping on a regular basis of existing or potential drivers of corruption and risks in all water-related institutions at different levels, including for public procurement (OECD, 2024, 46). • Multi-stakeholder approaches, dedicated tools and action plans identify and address water integrity and transparency gaps (e.g., integrity scans/pacts, risk analysis, social witnesses) (OECD, 2024, 46). 	
CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS	
Water governance functions can collectively uphold integrity and transparency through:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and strategy: Clear legal frameworks that establish roles and responsibilities, open communication, stakeholder engagement, and access to information. • Institutional arrangements: Open governance processes, free access to information, robust regulatory framework that ensure clarity on norms and standards, and independent accountability mechanisms that enforce and monitor water policies. • Finance: Transparent and participatory budgeting processes, and publicly available financial data. • Planning, monitoring and review: Transparent and participatory planning and monitoring, and the design, implementation, and regular monitoring of integrity plans within water-related institutions. • Capacity development: Users, service providers and policy-makers have the skills and ethics required to understand and uphold integrity standards. 	
BARRIERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption emerges from various factors, including its cultural acceptance, limited public awareness of its consequences, inadequate legal frameworks, and political interference. Institutional fragmentation and the presence of unregulated informal providers can further contribute to the problem (UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility, 2017; UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility, 2016). • Lack of political and institutional support: Lack of clear policies creates corruption loopholes, while insufficient priority on integrity at the highest-level fosters corruption. • Inconsistent enforcement of policies: Weak enforcement undermines integrity. 	

- Inadequate service delivery models: The existing service models are not well-adapted or appropriated by local authorities. Confusion over roles and responsibilities creates inefficiencies and fosters corruption.
- Weak regulatory framework and oversight: Lack of robust body for oversight of the water and sanitation sector or its lack of independence allows for unethical practices. In many cases, there is no clear accountability frameworks for relations between users, policy-makers, and service providers.
- Ineffective complaint and feedback mechanisms: In many countries, there are no well-defined mechanisms for receiving consumer complaints or feedback. Influence and bias may also affect the resolution of consumer grievances.
- Non-transparent budget processes: Ambiguous financial oversight makes it difficult to track funds and can lead to misuse, undermining equitable service delivery.
- Limited information for oversight: Absence of centralised tracking systems and misaligned evaluation systems can lead to inefficiencies or corruption.
- Lack of transparency in planning: Inadequate mechanisms for planning and for independent evaluation and corrective actions reduce capacities of stakeholders to demand accountability.
- Limited resources and capacities: Insufficient financial and institutional resources at the local level compromise equity and hinder the detection and resolution of integrity issues.
- Exclusion of stakeholders: Failure to engage vulnerable groups undermines trust and accountability in public institutions and processes.

SOLUTIONS

- Advocacy and institutional strengthening:
 - Advocacy with the corresponding ministry to establish a water monitoring system.
 - Awareness-raising among service providers and citizens on the importance of water service sustainability.
 - Operationalisation of institutions outlined in the water code and adaptation of qualification criteria to the context.
 - Strengthening of accountability frameworks, with clear role definitions between communities and the government, and improved feedback mechanisms.
- Collaboration and coordination:
 - Promotion of collaboration between various projects and programmes.
 - Adoption and promotion of a proactive management system for water services.
 - Implementation of a career management system for service providers, including incentives and sanctions for performance.
 - Adaptation of organisations and processes to the local context.
- Regulation and consumer protection:
 - Establishment of regulatory functions within relevant independent bodies (if they exist).
 - Revision of legal and institutional frameworks to improve clarity and effectiveness.
 - Setup of a regulatory authority to protect consumer rights and ensure compliance in the water sector.
 - Development and implement of a consumer feedback mechanism to address complaints and improve service delivery.
- Awareness and anti-corruption measures:
 - Awareness-raising about complaint mechanisms and establishment of suggestion boxes at the commune level.
 - Maintenance and expansion of water users' feedback and complaint systems.
 - Promotion of anti-corruption measures, including sanctions and better expense rationalisation.
- Resource mobilisation and capacity building:
 - Mobilisation of financial resources and transparent fund management.

EXAMPLES	
Building Trust through Transparency: Water Management in Italy's Enza River Basin	
<p>SDGs linked</p>  <p>Water risks</p> 	
<p>The Enza River basin, an area facing ecological, social, and economic challenges, has been the focus of a multi-stakeholder initiative since 2017. Climate change-induced water scarcity and flooding have underscored the need for integrated water management solutions. The River Contract, launched in September 2023, promotes a participatory decision-making process to balance economic, social, and environmental water needs. A key challenge has been engaging the agricultural sector, which heavily relies on water extraction yet resists changes to water management practices. The project has focused on transparency and communication, ensuring that stakeholders are well-informed, and their concerns are addressed. Through participatory workshops, stakeholders have gained knowledge on water issues, ecosystem services, and the benefits of sustainable management. The initiative aims to finalise an action plan by 2025, fostering long-term cooperation among municipalities, agricultural associations, universities, environmental NGOs, and public utilities.</p>	
<p>Linkages to Governance Principles</p> <p>Integrity and transparency have strengthened trust in the process, with open discussions addressing water use concerns and infrastructure feasibility. Stakeholder engagement has been key in facilitating dialogue among diverse actors, ensuring that different interests are represented. Managing trade-offs between agricultural, ecological, and social needs remains a central challenge, requiring inclusive decision-making. The project also integrates vulnerable groups, ensuring that all stakeholders, including small-scale farmers and local communities, have a voice in water governance.</p>	
REFERENCES	
<p>OECD (2024) <i>A handbook of what works</i>. OECD iLibrary. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/a-handbook-of-what-works_bf54627e-en</p> <p>UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility (2017) <i>Women and corruption in the water sector: Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá</i>. WGF Report No. 8. Stockholm: SIWI. https://siwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/wgf-report-no-8_final-web-edited.pdf</p> <p>UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility (2016) <i>Integrity in water governance</i>. Issue Sheet. https://siwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/issue-sheet-integrity-web-1.pdf</p>	