

# Data is the new water

UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

23 March 2023 | 9.30 EST | online  
Organized by Akvo



## Background ([recording of the event available](#))

It has often been said that data is the new oil, but this comparison is imperfect. Oil is scarce and finite, while data is an abundant and infinite resource. What's more, the idea of comparing data with fossil fuel at a time when sustainability is more important than ever seems outdated. So what about data as the new water? Coincidence or not, they share a vocabulary, both using words such as flow, pipeline, leakages, and (data) lakes. In this event, we looked into the comparison between data and water, and asked how we could apply our knowledge and expertise from the water sector to the data sector and vice versa. Current challenges and trends in both sectors require a completely different approach: a radical shake-up in how water is governed, managed and valued, from local to global scale, including a re-evaluation of human and natural water needs. This starts by managing data and information differently. The webinar explains the logic to call for managing water data as a common good, and how this thinking can lead to greater impact for the water sector.

## Water Action Agenda

Akvo's commitment:

Strengthen data and information for more efficient water sector stakeholders (data is the new water)

We have developed a methodology to highlight the data management steps needed for a data system to work in the water sector (including open data), with a focus on creating impact with data. Together with our partners, we are now developing data governance and ecosystems approaches around data to enhance water management as a common good, based on water data managed as a common good. When information is made available and main stakeholders take more efficient decisions on scarce funding resources (e.g. from policy makers, to civil society and/or funding agencies), they are likely to achieve better outcomes, increased return on investment, and improved program efficiency and management.

Besides our commitment Akvo is also supporting with the following Water Action Commitment

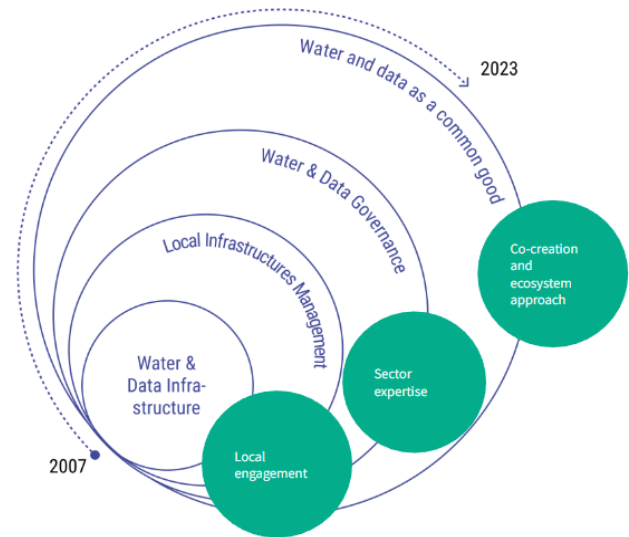
Produce and disseminate open, global groundwater datasets

And Akvo is one of the committing partners of Water Footprint Compensation. This concept implies a water user can mitigate the negative impacts of their water consumption by taking action to replenish, restore or protect the water system from which the water has been abstracted.

## Key topics discussed

- What data can teach us about the water sector and vice versa.
- Why sector expertise is essential for data governance and local engagement is important for data management.

- How a common good approach to engage all stakeholders with water data and information can lead to greater accountability, better service delivery, and business opportunities.
- Why the public sector, private stakeholders, and civil society should engage more in data sharing in order to increase the value of data for all.
- Our recommendations for the water sector, based on 10 years of data for development, mainly targeting contexts with less digital maturity to support stakeholders in connecting with data, gaining competencies and skills (data literacy), and enhancing the capacity to act on data and information to create impact for the water sector.



### Key recommendations for action

- Water (data) is a common good : Akvo believes that water should be managed as a common good , and water data too should be managed as a common good. This means that data systems and water systems should not be built for one stakeholder, but for everyone, from citizens to governments, across sectors.
- Impact contribution measurement: Stakeholders designing and using data systems should think about how their data systems can contribute to impact in the water sector, with regards to data management, data governance, and an ecosystem approach. In the long term, investments are needed in a comprehensive and coordinated multi-sector approach so that water data can be accurate, open and shared, and reused to achieve maximum impact. (including for monitoring the 700 commitments from the water action plan).
- Ecosystem approach: We recommend services that provide value in the long run, for citizens, governments, and water sector stakeholders, and aim to limit the duplication of efforts with a holistic data ecosystem approach. We use information as the anchor to enhance capacity for a better future. Eventually, each citizen is impacted by decisions on water management, and thus has a role to play in deciding about their own water safety, access and decisions.

More information [on the case study](http://www.akvo.org) presented : RUSH - Kenya at <http://www.akvo.org>