

EU Green Talks Webinar

Water Sustainability and Clean Oceans 2021

The role of civil society in raising awareness of managing
water scarcity and pollution

from “prayer to rain” to “giving rivers legal identity”!

Dr Ahmed Gaber

Professor of Chemical Engineering at Cairo University,
and Chairman of Chemonics Egypt

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Purpose Statement

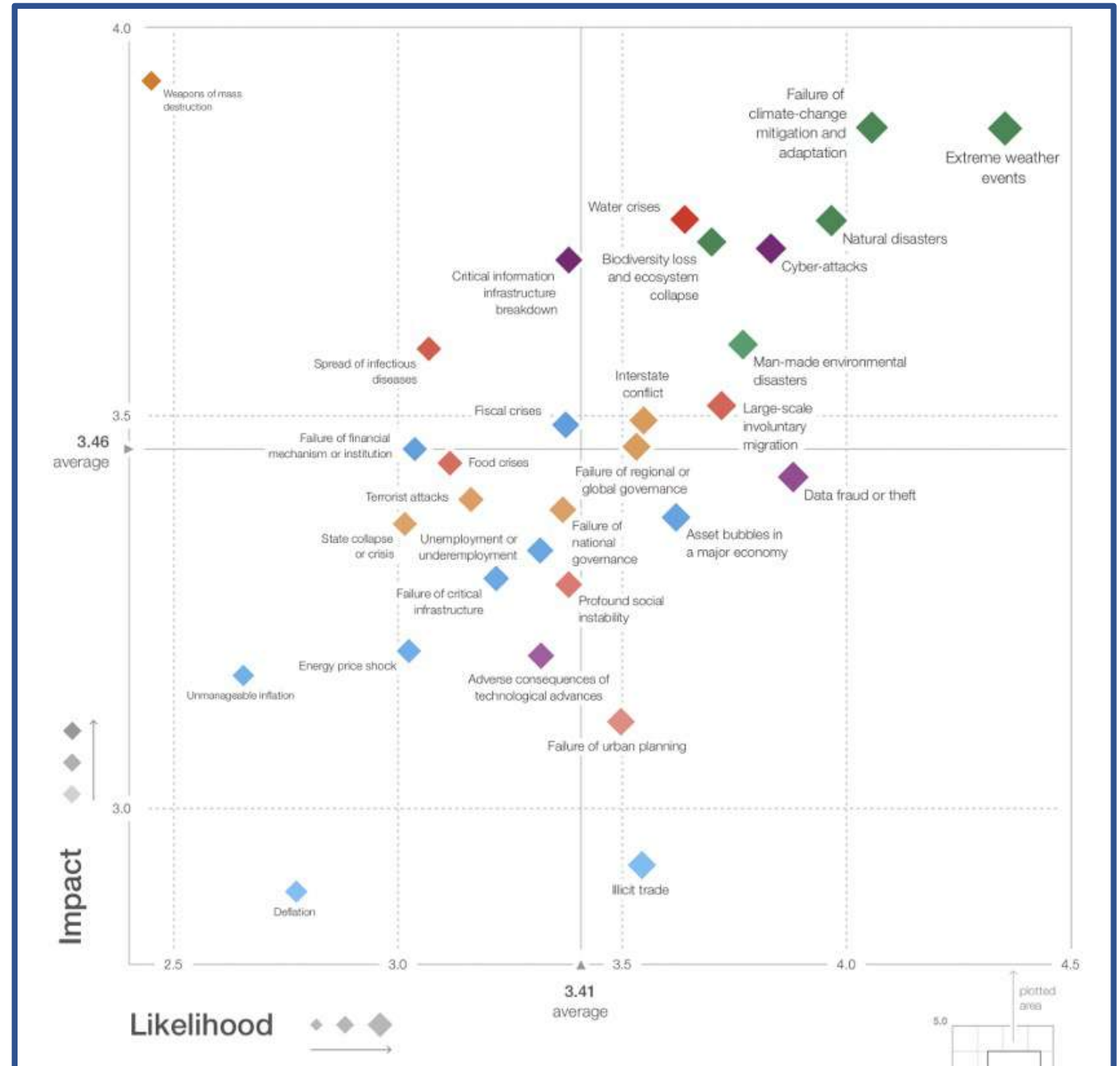
The purpose of my talk is to highlight the role of civil society in facing water scarcity and water pollution problems.

30 Global risks subdivided into 5 categories:

- Economic
- Environmental
- Geopolitical
- Social
- Technological

Some researchers and politicians like to call it “water crisis”.
On the risk diagram, it varies on the likelihood scale and on the impact scale from country to country

Source: Values at risk? Sustainability risks and goals in the Dutch financial sector, 2019

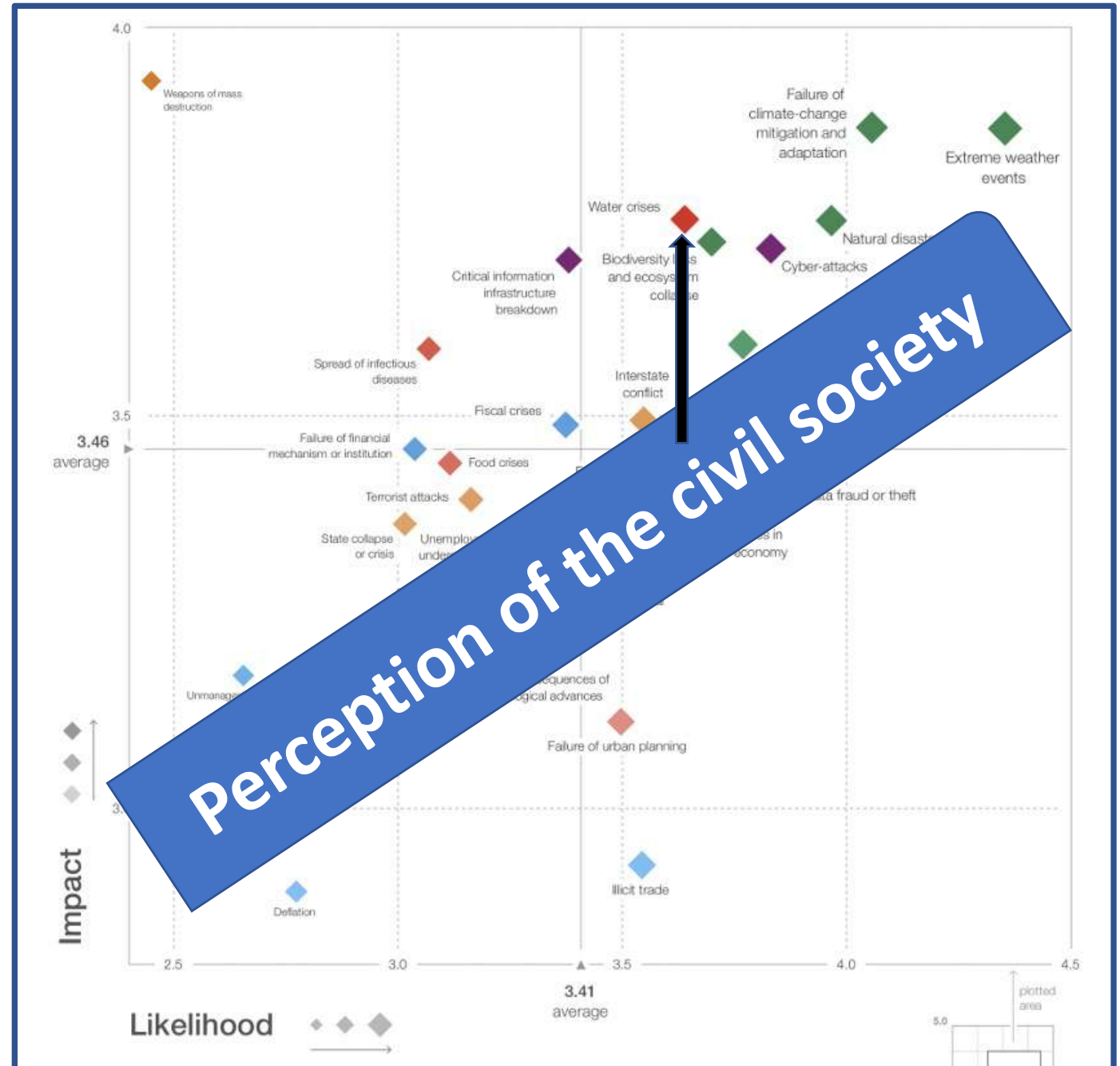


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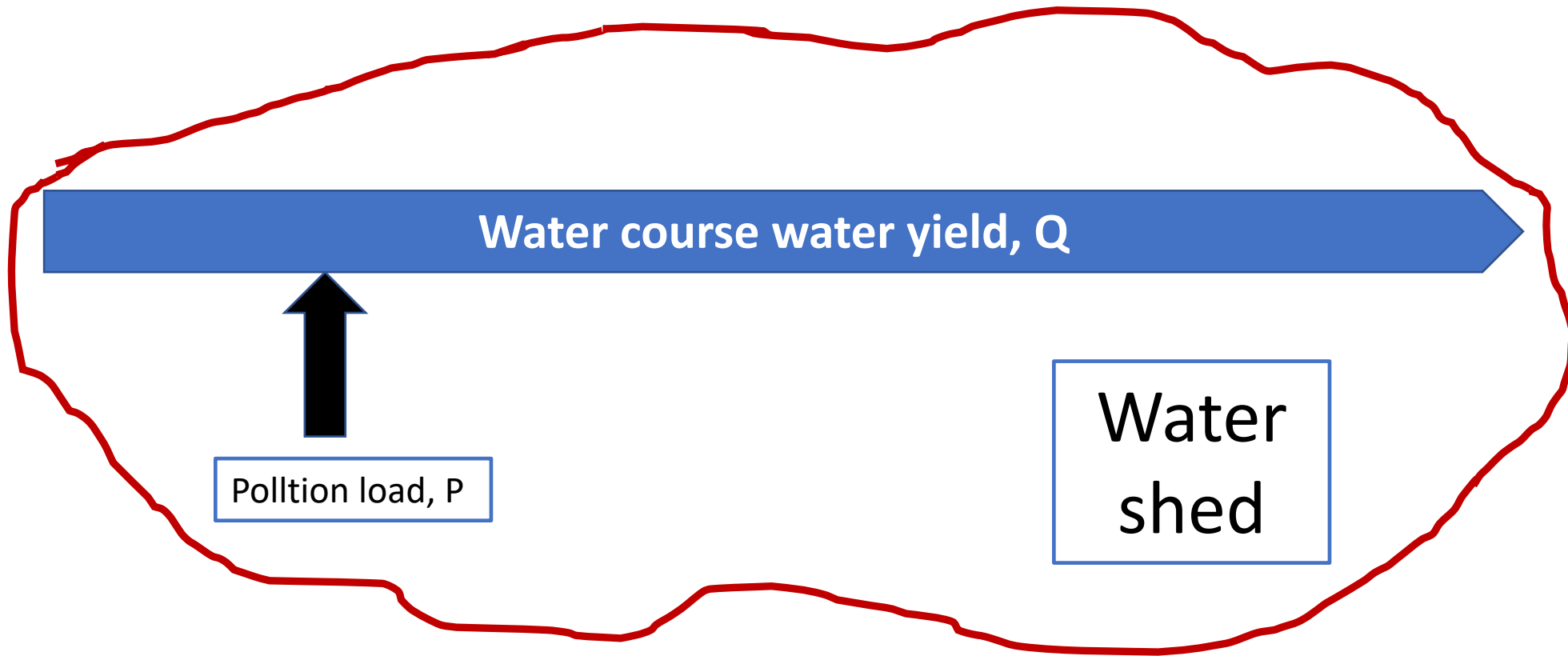
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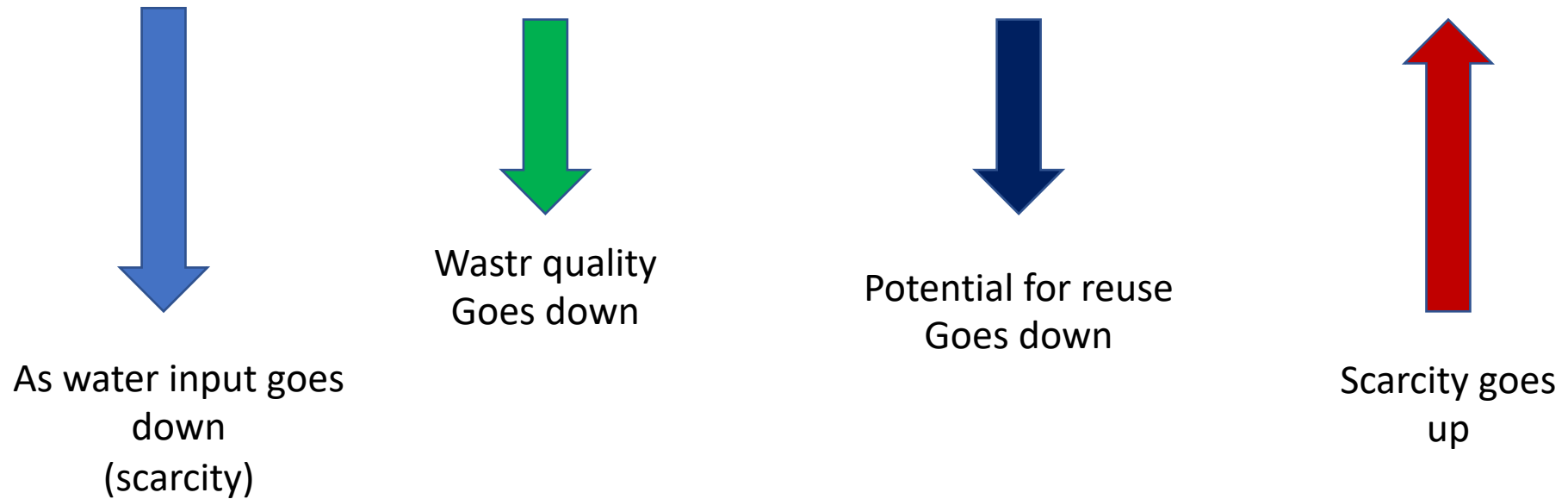
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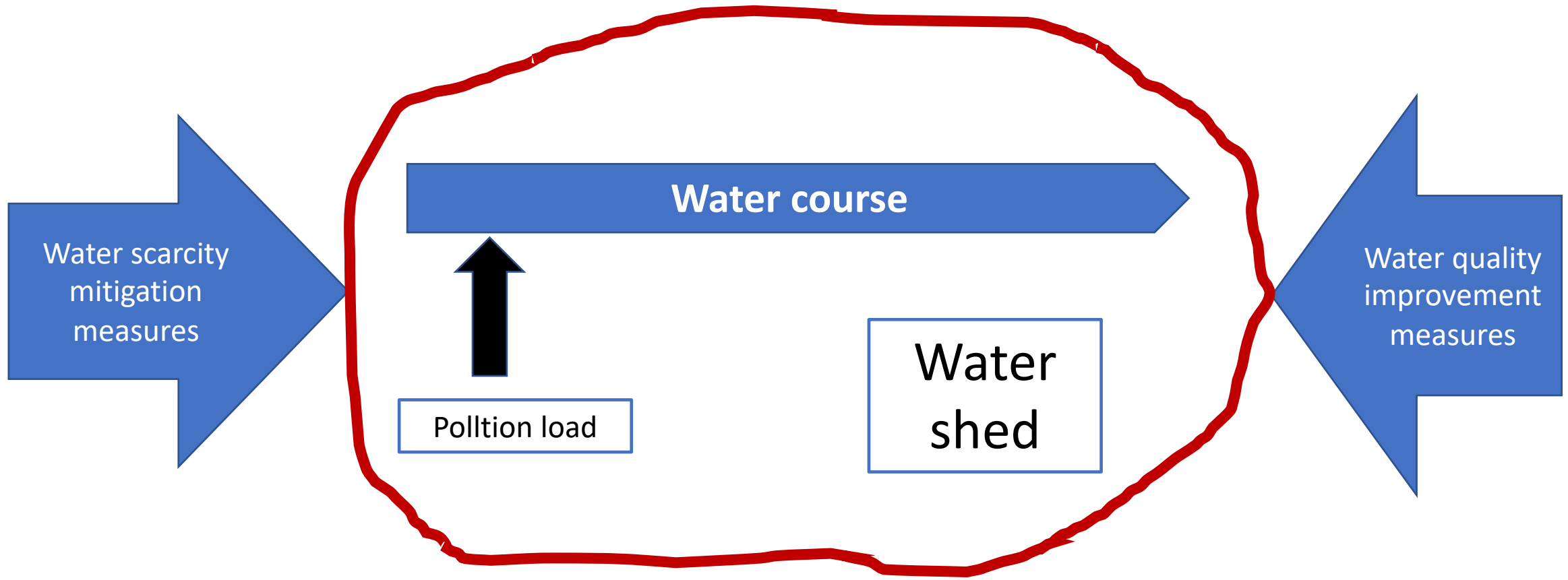
The relation between water scarcity and water pollution



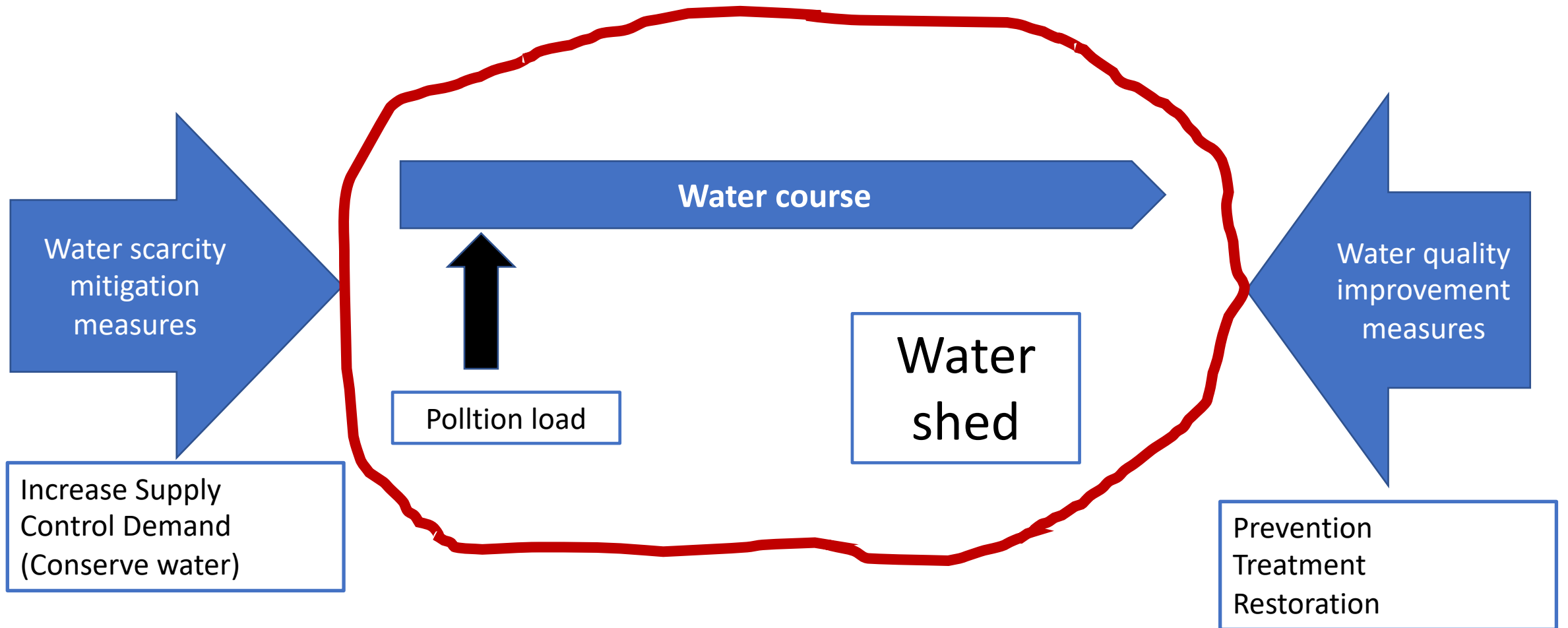
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The actions in facing water scarcity and water pollution



The actions in facing water scarcity and water pollution



What the civil society can do?

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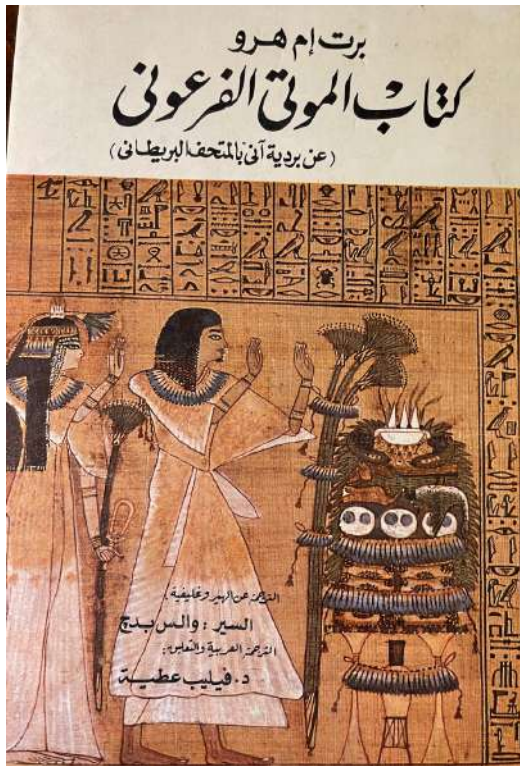
Pray!

In every culture and religion, there is
a rain prayer

What civil society can do?

Pray!

٣٥ . هلا .. يا من تفعل وفق
مشيئتك يا من أتيت من تيبو ،
إني لم ألوث أبدا الماء



Papyrus of Ani, 1250 BC, Book of the Dead, the negative confession, is a list of 42 sins which the soul of the deceased can honestly say it has never committed when it stands in judgment in the afterlife:

- I never polluted water
- I have never stopped water to flow a neighbor

What civil society can do?

Creating legal rights for rivers

As pressures on water resources increase, the demand for innovative institutional arrangements, which address the overuse of water, and under provision of ecosystem health, is rising. One new and emerging approach is the use of legal personality to protect water systems in law through the granting of legal rights to rivers. This constitutes a significant development in the fields of environmental law and water resources management.

What civil society can do?

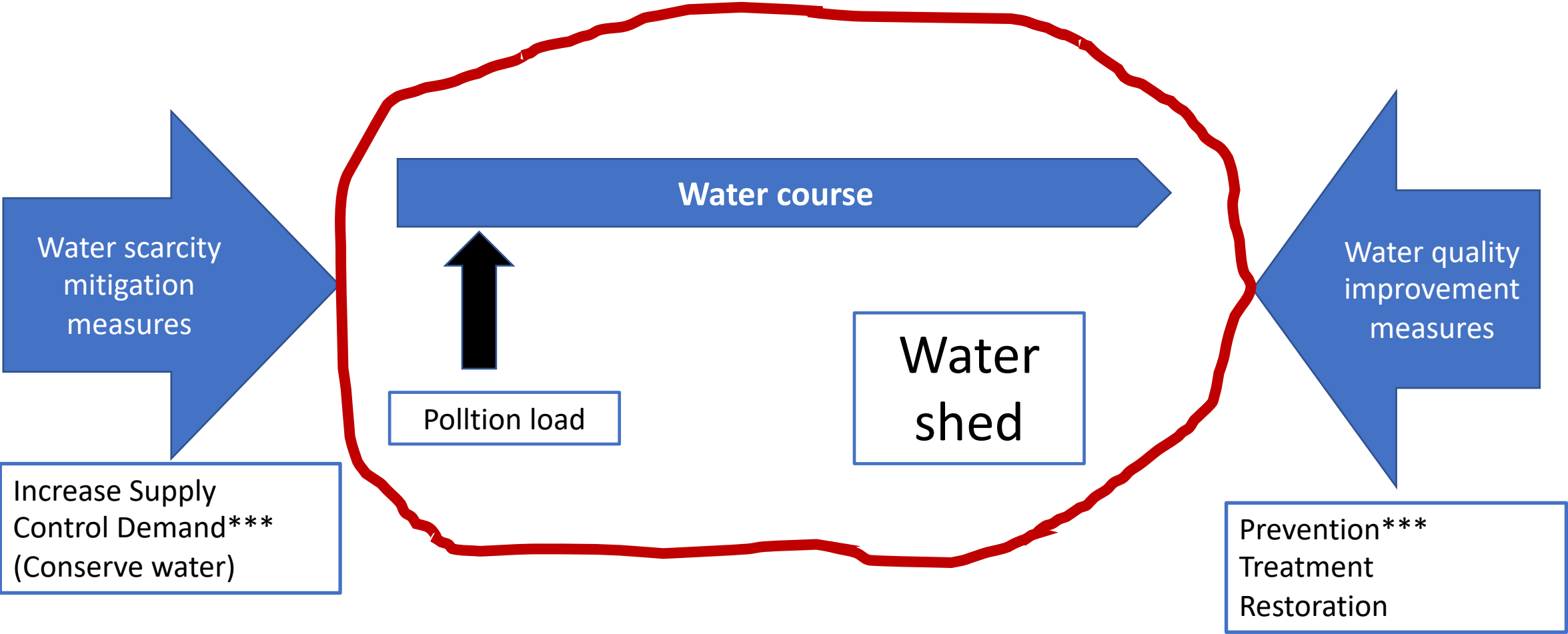
Let us put it on a scale

Pray

**Creating
legal rights
for rivers**

Both actions create awareness

But we need more than awareness!



Civil Society as a critical stakeholder

- Civil society has become in many parts of the world a critical stakeholder in water-related decision-making processes and a valued partner in implementing and monitoring water policies at the local, national, and global levels.
- When their capacities are adequately developed, civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide technical assistance to communities and support water conservation and water quality improvement programs at the local level, while providing policy recommendations to local and national governments and facilitating communication between the government and local actors.

Spectrum of what civil society can do

- Mobilization of public opinion: NGOs can raise the awareness and influence public opinion through informational campaigns about water scarcity
- Representation of the voiceless: NGOs can help vocalize civil interests, which are often under-represented in policy-making, and facilitate constructive dialogue between civil society and authorities;
- Access to competing ideas: NGOs can share competing ideas to policy makers, thereby facilitating negotiations and carrying the public voice and concerns to the policy level;
- Provide technical support: NGOs can provide informed suggestions for appropriate actions to mitigate the impact of water scarcity and face pollution problems
- Participation in operational activities: NGOs can contribute technical expertise on environmental challenges and solutions as well as directly participate in operational activities, supporting implementation and management of water conservation initiatives
- Monitoring: NGOs can support water scarcity and depollution programs through monitoring of outputs and outcomes

Water Governance

- Water governance refers to the institutions, policies, rules, and practices that determine how governments, the private sector, and civil society interact with the water at local, national and international levels.
- The engagement of civil society actors, primarily NGOs, has become accepted practice for water governance in many parts of the world
- Effective water governance ensures the participation of all actors – governments, NGOs, the private sector, civil society and community groups, ordinary citizens – in collaborative efforts towards water sustainable development.
- Civil society organizations can assist in identifying, creating, and monitoring water and sustainable development policies and processes.
- It has been proven that the diverse stakeholders who are affected by water scarcity related policies and impacts are be able to participate in monitoring them.

Elaboration on the Role of civil society

- Civil society plays a key role in bridging the information between the population and policy makers.
- It can support information collection and dissemination, policy development, policy implementation, advocacy, as well as assessment and monitoring, making sure that concerns of those affected by environmental challenges and policies are considered in environmental governance.
- NGOs also promote networking of different stakeholders to address issues in a collaborative manner and help to develop the skills and mindset necessary for sustainable management of (natural) resources.
- Besides from advisory and support roles, civil society organizations can also take on a more direct role in environmental management and governance, for example, through representation on multistakeholder governance platforms

Final remarks

- Civil society covers a wide range of actors, including individuals, religious and academic institutions, and issue-focused groups such as not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations. In the water governance space, NGOs are usually the most prominent actors
- NGOs involved in water governance usually have missions dedicated to water conservation, water protection and sustainable development. Their type of involvement and operations varies by organization but can cover local, national, regional, and/or international levels.