



SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme

IWRM Acceleration Package

2.D Action Planning and Prioritisation of Actions

October 2021

What is an IWRM Action Plan?

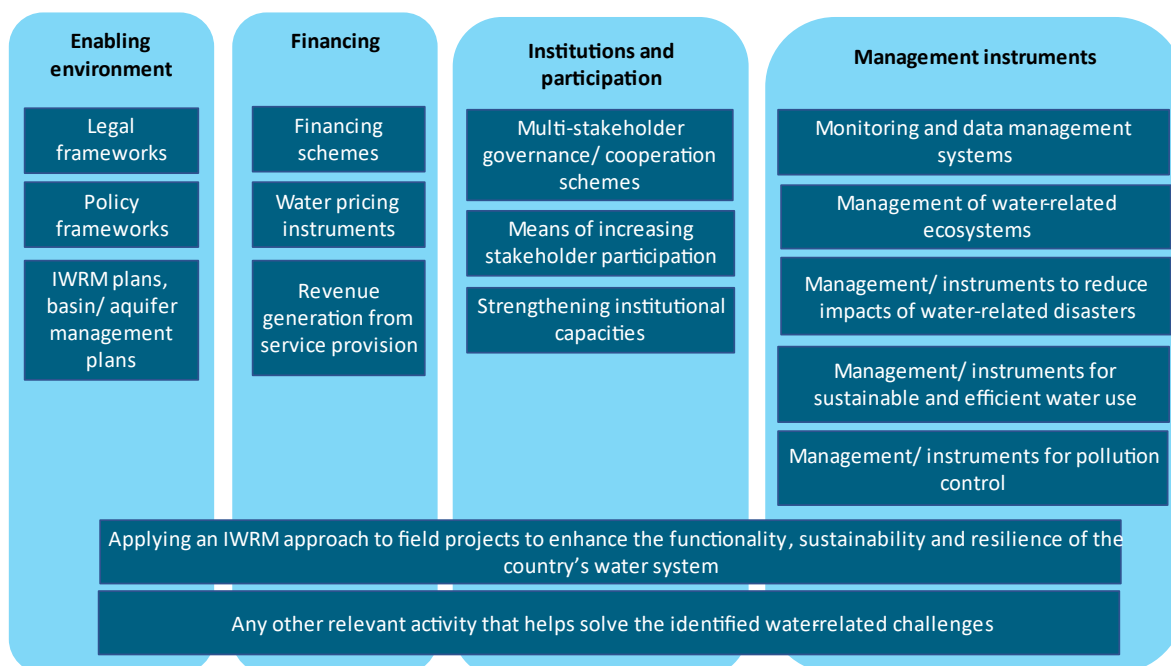
An IWRM Action Plan is a shared multi-annual commitment from different stakeholders in the country to advance IWRM implementation as a contribution to achieving the water-related SDGs. It should contain a limited number of priority interventions designed to help solve some of the country's most significant water-related challenges. These actions should be ambitious investment opportunities that shift the needle on SDG 6.5.1 and other water-related SDGs. They should attract funding and support from national public and private sectors and international donors. An Action Plan should be realistic and business-like in its framing and approach.

An IWRM Action Plan should not be a new fully-fledged national IWRM plan but rather be subordinate and supportive to the existing policy framework for IWRM. It should contain a portfolio of government-endorsed water-related actions defined through a multi-stakeholder dialogue process and employing an IWRM approach. It should also not be a stand-alone document, separate from ongoing efforts to reach the water-related SDGs, climate adaptation goals, biodiversity targets and other relevant frameworks. Since each country presents a different set of circumstances, there is no one-size-fits-all "recipe" for producing an IWRM Action Plan. If a country has an existing national IWRM plan or similar, Stage 2 may focus on identifying the appropriate implementation pathway for some aspects of that plan. This could for example consist of fostering multi-stakeholder support to accelerate interventions from that plan that may be quick wins or "low-hanging fruits". If a country has no national IWRM plan, Stage 2 may identify the need to formally establish such a plan, or to ensure that an IWRM approach is inserted into the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) or National Adaptation Plan (NAP), among other interventions contemplated in Stage 3. Similarly, if a country has an outdated national IWRM plan, the updating of that plan could be a Stage 3 activity that could be prioritised in Stage 2.

Contents of an IWRM Action Plan

An IWRM Action Plan should contain a *shortlist* of priority actions that can be feasibly funded and implemented within an agreed timeframe (a separate "long list" of other actions identified through the Stage 2 process can be maintained for future consideration). The Action Plan's ambition should be balanced with realism, acknowledging that full IWRM implementation and outcome-level results may take much longer than the suggested timeframe of the Action Plan (typically 3-5 years, with a suggested bi-annual or yearly follow-up to ensure proper monitoring and evaluation). The shortlist of actions should have a basic monitoring framework and a theory of change explaining how they would contribute to solving water-related challenges. That basic monitoring framework can be defined at the level of the entire Action Plan or for groups of related actions, depending on the thematic and geographic relationship between actions.

Potential areas of actions



They may be national, sub-national or transboundary in scope. The Action Plan should explain the context of these interventions, responsible actors, human resources, timeframe and potential or actual funding sources, and an appropriate management framework and coordination mechanism(s) to facilitate their implementation, follow-up and evaluation. Action data sheets are included as an annexe to the Action Plan, and additional concept briefs may be prepared if required, in order to present the actions attractively and thus improve their bankability.

The IWRM Action Plan should build on existing national plans, programmes, processes and priorities, to help ensure that the solutions contribute to existing commitments, thus increasing resource efficiency and impact. The extent to which the work engages with aspects beyond SDG 6.5.1 is at the discretion of each country. Examples of the entry points that the Stage 2 process might link to include:

- formal existing or planned national water governance-related initiatives, such as national or sub-national IWRM plans
- climate-related priorities, as exemplified by the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) or Green Climate Fund projects, among others
- national biodiversity-related targets, such as those under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework
- disaster risk reduction initiatives such as those under the Sendai Framework
- other national and regional sustainable development frameworks, investment programmes or related socioeconomic development projects, either under implementation or in the pipeline
- ongoing water governance reform processes
- ongoing governance reform processes with an emphasis on strengthening participation and inclusion of all stakeholders, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, in planning and decision-making processes

The Support Programme strongly emphasises multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue to achieve a holistic perspective on water management challenges, increasing the likelihood of buy-in from a wide range of actors. Recognising the importance of “no decision about us without us”, **it is anticipated that an IWRM Action Plan should strongly reflect the results of diverse stakeholder input from in-person and/or virtual stakeholder consultations or workshops.** Recognising this multi-stakeholder nature, each action may be supported and implemented by one or more organisations in coordination with the central government.

Gender-responsive Action Planning

Given the important role that women play in water resource management, it is crucial that both the process and the outcomes of Stage 2 are gender-responsive and should aim to actively support the mainstreaming of gender into water resources management at all stages, in line with SDG 5 on gender equality.¹

Prioritising actions

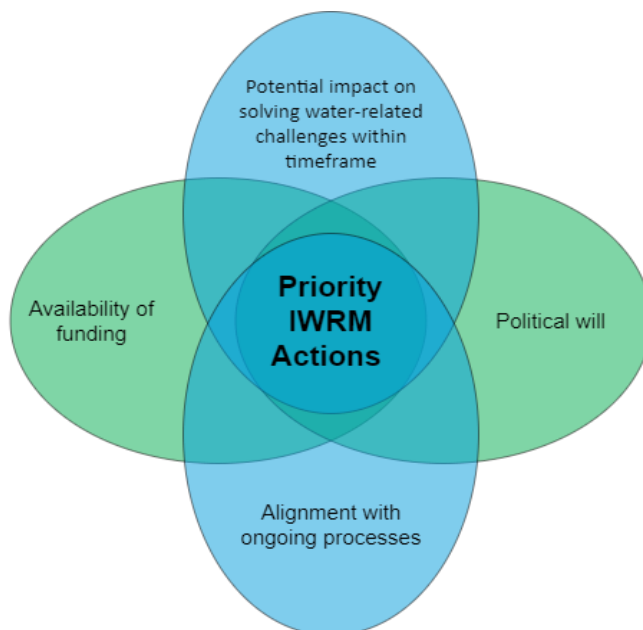
Key to the success of this process is the **prioritisation** of appropriate interventions to address identified water-related challenges. While the prioritisation criteria for potential interventions might differ from one country to another, the following graphic suggests a simplified set of four criteria. One suggested means of transparently engaging stakeholders in this prioritisation is to use a simple spreadsheet (See Annexe 1) or online voting system for participants to rank the potential actions against these criteria (or others of the country’s choice). Those scoring above a pre-defined total (perhaps 75 per cent) would be the most likely to generate the desired impacts and would therefore be the priority interventions considered for the IWRM Action Plan. When prioritising actions, it is suggested that the Valuing Water Principles (see box) could be regarded as inspiration, since using the shared values between participants may highlight actions that could have greater long-term impact. It should be noted that GWP has committed in its [2020-2025 Strategy](#) to supporting the incorporation of the multiple values of water in decision making.

Valuing Water Principles

These principles, adopted by the United Nations High-Level Panel on Water, may be considered when prioritising the potential interventions (see [here](#) for more information):

1. Recognize and embrace water’s multiple values
2. Reconcile values and build trust
3. Protect the sources
4. Educate to empower
5. Invest and innovate

Annexe 1: Example for Prioritisation Matrix



Potential Actions	Political will (1-10, 10 being the highest)	Alignment with ongoing processes (1-10, 10 being the highest)	Availability of funding (1-10, 10 being the highest)	Potential impact (1-10, 10 being the highest)	Total (Sum of scores per action)
Action 1					
Action 2					
Action 3					
...					