

GWP & TRANSBOUNDARY WATER

Catalysing collaboration for joint management of shared water resources



The Drin river is shared between 5 riparians in South East Europe.

60% per cent of the world's freshwater flows are transboundary, shared among 153 States, serving 2.8 billion people. Supporting the joint management of these water resources can pave the way for broad regional collaboration along Sustainable Development Goals.

Turning tensions into opportunities for collaboration

While shared water bodies represent a crucial natural resource, agreements for transboundary cooperation for their effective management are often lacking. As one country's actions impact others downstream, lack of coordination will tend to generate conflict, unless efforts to establish collaboration are fostered. Experience shows that effective and lasting collaboration can be successfully promoted through key interventions to support science-based

dialogue and increased capacities. Once related processes and institutions are set up, transboundary water cooperation benefits SDGs as a whole, beyond water targets.

Joint action for effective shared natural resources management

As a global leader in promoting Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), GWP leverages its unique global network of 3000+ partners across 180 countries to:

- **Catalyze cooperation at regional, local and basin levels through regional dialogue processes.** GWP is successfully mobilising stakeholders across all levels to come together in dialogues that foster transboundary water cooperation and support the creation and operation of transboundary institutional bodies and frameworks, basin IWRM plans and strategic action plans, and facilitate the accession process towards the global

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transboundary related conventions and agreements.

The key to impactful regional dialogue processes

To share guidance for effectively setting up and running effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, GWP analysed its long-standing experience of facilitating dialogue processes in 3 regions, South East Europe, South Asia and Southern Africa, to highlight the factors that led to success in terms of sustaining collaboration and promoting tangible action to tackle environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

[Access the publication](#)

- **Build capacities through specialised training and sustaining Communities of Practice.** GWP is effectively building capacities of transboundary water managers across the world, through on-line and on-site initiatives. Through sharing of knowledge and examples of management practices, peer to peer learning has proven to be the most impactful way for water practitioners to turn learning into practice.
- **Catalysing action from source to sea:** Six of the 10 rivers contributing 90% of plastic waste to oceans are transboundary. Coordinated management of all water bodies from source to sea is required to address inter-connected challenges, and it is particularly challenging when rivers cross borders. Based on GWP's experience on IWRM, GWP leads the Healthy Rivers, Healthy Ocean (HRHO) programme, a program endorsed as UN Ocean Decade of Science.

Building capacities for effective transboundary cooperation

Launched in August 2020 by GWP and GEF IW:LEARN, the **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security** has attracted more than 3,600 learners from 163 countries, enhancing skills and capacities relating to the fundamentals of transboundary water security, international water law (IWL), water diplomacy, negotiations, institutions, management tools, and sustainable finance.

Running at the pan-African level since 2015, GWP's **Water Governance and International Water Law (IWL) Training** is providing tools for enhancing understanding of shared benefits and establishing collaborative governance mechanisms for the efficient management of transboundary water resources. A full 95% of participants responded that IWL helped them upgrade their negotiation skills, which they went on to apply to regional processes, including the establishment of Incomati and Maputo river basin organisation, transboundary negotiations between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire on the Black Volta river basin resources, as well as water sharing agreements for Save and Buzi river basins between Mozambique and Zimbabwe

HRHO provides an excellent framework to reduce pollution from throughout the water cycle, and to accelerate source-to-sea action through adopting innovative approach, foster knowledge among key actors and to adopt source to sea approach at different basins globally.

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Impact Highlights

Joint Action to tackle environmental challenges in the Western Balkans

The Drin basin, shared by five riparians, a mosaic of diversity with a history of political conflict, has become the focus of extensive transboundary cooperation, following a 10-year long process assisted by GWP-Mediterranean. The recently developed **Drin Strategic Action Programme (SAP)**, formally adopted in 2020, embodies high-level political commitments on behalf of all riparians for the joint sustainable management of the basin. The SAP was developed following a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis which identified key environmental challenges in the basin, within the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Drin Project, implemented by GWP-Mediterranean.

Enhancing regional cooperation for sustainable development in Southern Africa

Home to more than 40 million people from 8 countries, the Zambezi river has recently become a focus of regional collaboration. GWP-Southern Africa played a catalytic role in the adoption, in 2018, of the **Strategic Plan for the Zambezi Watercourse (ZSP)**. The ZSP provides an integrated framework for tackling environmental challenges, building up climate resilience and paving the way for strategic investments to promote sustainable development in the region. GWP Southern Africa supported the adoption of the ZSP through the Water, Climate and Development Programme (WACDEP) and the SADC Transboundary Water Management Programme.



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