

BRIEFING NOTE

Global Water Partnership: a key global asset



This paper articulates Global Water Partnership's (GWP) strategic position in the context of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

GWP supports countries to achieve sustainable human, environmental, and economic development by facilitating implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, using the comparative advantage of an on-the-ground multi-stakeholder network and 20 years of knowledge and experience on integrated approaches of multi-level partnerships.

The challenge

All people, economies, and ecosystems depend on water. Yet water is often taken for granted, overused, abused, and poorly managed. The way we use and manage water leaves a considerable part of the global population without access, and threatens the integrity of ecosystems that are vital for a healthy planet.

Water insecurity keeps millions of people in poverty; it hampers human development and is a drag on economic growth. Water insecurity is worsened by population growth, economic growth, urbanisation, conflicts, and climate change. Such trends increase competition over water and put water resources at risk, just as water presents risks to growth and society if not managed sustainably.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* agreed by 193 countries at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 recognises these trends and calls for an “*all-of-society engagement and partnership*” to address development challenges in a transformative and inclusive way, with the intention of “*leaving no one behind.*” At the core of the 2030 Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. The SDGs are ambitious, aspirational, and interconnected: to have any chance of success they demand tailor-made approaches and collaborative action.

Poverty reduction and growth are not possible without good water governance and management. Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 – “*to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*” – speaks directly to GWP. This water goal is inextricably linked to and mutually dependent on most other goals, including poverty reduction, gender equality, climate, food, energy, health, cities, and ecosystems.

SDG 6 provides a high level political commitment to an integrated approach to water security. Target 6.5 is the denominator that GWP Partners in all their diversity have in common: “*By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate*”. The basis of the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach that GWP has helped embed into policy-making worldwide is the need to tackle trade-offs and establish

BRIEFING NOTE

cooperation based on a fair and efficient allocation of water resources. Inclusive water governance is the key that connects multiple targets within Goal 6 as well as with other relevant goals and targets, especially to Goal 17, Means of Implementation.

Who we are

GWP pioneered the integrated approach as a means to achieve a *water secure world*. That is GWP's vision as stated in our "Towards 2020" strategy and reflected in our mission "*to advance governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development.*"

A network with purpose

GWP is a not-for-profit global network with a diverse partnership of 3,000 organisations from 178 countries covering government, private sector, and civil society constituencies. It is structured around 13 regional and 85 country water partnerships that are politically neutral platforms for policy dialogue and bottom-up development of action plans and programmes. GWP practices diversity and inclusion and facilitates the equal participation of women and youth; it provides a voice for communities and promotes integrity, accountability, and transparency. GWP does not lobby for vested interests and is not a commercial consultancy.

A lean, transparent and accountable organisation

The GWP Network is supported by a Stockholm-based intergovernmental organisation (GWPO). A Steering Committee with strong regional representation acts as the executive body of GWPO to guide the work of the Network and the Intergovernmental Organisation. The Steering Committee is supported by a lean secretariat to provide due diligence, and a global Technical Committee that articulates knowledge to inform global and national policymaking. The GWP structure mobilises and accounts for funds and in-kind support.

What we do

GWP works to create the enabling environment for an integrated approach: high-level political

A partnership with distinctive capabilities

- A flexible and inclusive network operating at many levels, cultivating trust, and building human and institutional capacity;
- A link between governments and citizens, providing a means for consultation and collaboration with stakeholders from many constituencies and sectors;
- A global public policy forum for evidence-based decision-making for integrated water resources management and governance;
- A permanently evolving community of practice and knowledge base for integrated approaches that overcome complexity in water management, balancing economic and social development while safeguarding the environment;
- A global thought leader providing trustworthy, independent, and innovative thinking.

commitment, evidence-based policies, and strong partners from different types of stakeholders. To that effect, GWP has three interdependent strategic goals: Goal 1 (**Catalyse Change in Policies and Practice**) and Goal 2 (**Generate and Communicate Knowledge**), which depend on Goal 3 (**Strengthen Partnerships**). The GWP gender and youth strategies cut across these goals to ensure women's equal participation and intergenerational cooperation. GWP's partnerships communicate knowledge to help countries develop and implement policies as a basis for investments. Pursuing these goals require us to engage in the following overarching activities:

BRIEFING NOTE

Supporting national development. GWP supports governments and other stakeholders to move from sectoral and top-down water management to integrated and participatory water governance at all levels. Our multi-stakeholder platforms and programmes are a vehicle to develop and implement policies and plans, to strengthen reporting and accountability mechanisms, maximise institutional effectiveness, and access financing options. Knowledge is shared for improved institutional performance (in particular south-to-south learning) and social capital is built for an all-of-society engagement to find soft solutions to hard problems. The investment in social capital, institutions, and information improves governance, contributing to safeguarding transboundary watersheds and aquifers and making the massive investments in water infrastructure more sustainable.

Influencing global policies. Managing water sustainably requires international agreement and commitment. GWP influences global and regional processes through engagement with partners such as the UN System, International Finance Institutions, the African Union, and Regional Economic Commissions. GWP organises dialogues at various levels and provides a voice for water in global fora. GWP contributes its knowledge to foster a common understanding among world leaders and to further agreement on how to solve water crises and prevent water risks. GWP invites countries sharing transboundary river and groundwater basins to establish cooperation based on IWRM principles, to which end GWP and its local partners can contribute with technical support. The GWP Network enhances society's role in the monitoring and review process of the SDGs.



Facilitating implementation. GWPO is not an implementing agency. Partners in the GWP Network can be involved in implementation through jointly developed pilots or by participating in projects of third parties. GWP helps its network to contribute to countries' planning and implementation processes at different scales (regional, transboundary, national, local) and in differing environments (urban and rural). GWP creates synergies across sectors and social strata so that programmes are coherent and sustainable. GWP works towards local ownership to build institutional capacity for long-term changes on how water is managed in an integrated and inclusive manner.

Our ambitions

GWP's ambition is to put water central in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and related agreements and frameworks; to convince country leaders at various levels that integrated water resources management and governance is the foundation and the glue for achieving food and energy security, poverty alleviation, social stability, disaster risk reduction, and peace. GWP is committed to the water-related development goals and targets as the foundation of social justice, economic prosperity, and environmental integrity; this includes a strong positioning of non-state actors in the global water architecture.

Country level funding and buy-in from on-the-ground partners are fundamental to success. Our country level engagement is with partners relevant to the Agenda 2030, UNFCCC, and Sendai institutional landscape. In partnership with investors and the business community, GWP will help countries avoid unsustainable pathways, such as the "grow first, clean up later" paradigm.

BRIEFING NOTE

The heart of our ambition

Water is about people so the human dimension – especially among poor communities and those suffering from disasters or conflict – is at the heart of our ambition. To reach this ambition, GWP:

- Contributes to national processes for the achievement of water-related SDGs and targets. Synergies with other water-related targets, including Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, is sought for the benefit of the poor and marginalised;
- Ensures up-to-date knowledge and capacity for partners to take action on water security;
- Implements demonstration programmes to identify best practice solutions to be scaled up;
- Puts the network first by strengthening country dimensions, building capacity, ensuring diversity and inclusion of stakeholders, enhancing accountability frameworks, and providing financial and governance support.

We focus on where we can add value, based on demand, recognising that countries are at different points on the development spectrum with different demands and capacities. The impact of GWP interventions will be to secure water resource availability that balances social, economic, and environmental needs, taking account of climate risks along the water value chain.

With the 2030 Agenda in place, the world has never been better positioned to bring peace and prosperity to all people on the planet. The Agenda makes clear that a strengthened global partnership is central to implementation. GWP enthusiastically places itself at the service of that Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, drawing on 20 years of know-how to support countries in implementing the water-related development goals.



#GWP20

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