

## Dublin-Rio Principles

At its birth in 1996, GWP took its guiding principles from the Dublin and Rio statements of 1992.

The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development was agreed at the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE), on 26-31 January 1992, a preparatory meeting of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to be held later that year.

The Dublin Statement, which included four principles on water, was submitted to the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, also known as The Earth Summit. Hence the name, Dublin-Rio principles.

GWP adapted and elaborated these principles to reflect an international understanding of the “equitable and efficient management and sustainable use of water”:

### **Principle 1: Water is a finite and vulnerable resource**

*Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development, and the environment.*

### **Principle 2: Participatory approach**

*Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners, and policy-makers at all levels.*

### **Principle 3: Role of women**

*Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.*

### **Principle 4: Social and economic value of water**

*Water is a public good and has a social and economic value in all its competing uses.*

(See below for an elaboration of these principles.)

These principles were later summarized by GWP:

*Integrated water resources management is based on the equitable and efficient management and sustainable use of water and recognises that water is an integral part of the ecosystem, a natural resource, and a social and economic good, whose quantity and quality determine the nature of its utilisation.*

This summary emphasizes the importance of an integrated approach as well as clearly articulating the link between water resources management and the “3Es” of sustainable development: economic efficiency in water use, social equity, and environmental and ecological sustainability.

## More on the Dublin-Rio Principles

### **Principle 1: Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment**

This principle recognizes all the characteristics of the hydrological cycle and its interaction with other natural resources and ecosystems.

The statement also recognizes that water is required for many different purposes, functions, and services; holistic management, therefore, has to involve consideration of the demands placed on the resources and the threats to it.

Holistic management not only involves the management of natural systems; it also necessitates coordination between the range of human activities which create the demands for water, determine land uses and generate water borne waste products.

Creating a water sensitive political economy requires coordinated policy making at all levels (from national ministries to local government or community-based institutions).

There is also a need for mechanisms which ensure that economic sector decision makers take water costs and sustainability into account when making production and consumption choices.

The development of an institutional framework capable of integrating human systems – economic, social and political – represents a considerable challenge.

### **Principle 2: Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels**

Water is a subject in which everyone is a stakeholder. Real participation only takes place when stakeholders are part of the decision making process.

This can occur directly when local communities come together to make water supply, management and use choices.

Participation also occurs if democratically elected or otherwise accountable agencies or spokespersons can represent stakeholder groups. The type of participation will depend upon the spatial scale relevant to particular water management and investment decisions and upon the nature of the political economy in which such decisions take place.

Participation requires that stakeholders at all levels of the social structure have an impact on decisions at different levels of water management. Consultative mechanisms will not allow real participation if they are merely employed to legitimize decisions already made, to defuse political opposition or to delay the implementation of measures which could adversely impinge upon a powerful interest group.

A participatory approach is the only means for achieving long lasting consensus and common agreement. However, for this to occur, stakeholders and officials from water management agencies have to recognize that the sustainability of the resource is a common problem and that all parties are going to have to sacrifice some desires for the common good.

Participation is about taking responsibility, recognizing the effect of sectoral actions on other water users and aquatic ecosystems and accepting the need for change to improve the efficiency of water use and allow the sustainable development of the resource.

Governments at all levels have the responsibility to make participation possible. This involves creating mechanisms for stakeholder consultation. Governments also have to help create participatory capacity, particularly among women and other marginalized social groups.

**Principle 3: Women play a central part in the provision, management, and safeguarding of water**

It is widely acknowledged that women play a key role in the collection and safeguarding of water for domestic and, in many cases, agricultural use, but have much less influence than men in management, problem analysis, and decision making related to water resources.

Attention to gender is essential to sound development practice and is at the heart of economic and social progress. Development cannot be maximised and sustained without recognition that every policy, program and project affects women and men differently.

Addressing gender as a cross-cutting goal requires that women's views, interests and needs shape the development agenda as much as men's, and that the development agenda support progress toward more equal relations between women and men.

Gender needs should be part of the overall policy framework which can ensure that policies, programs, and projects address the differences in experiences and situations between and among women and men.

Equal participation in social and political issues involves women's equal right to articulate their needs and interests, as well as their vision of society, and to shape the decisions that affect their lives. Their ability to do this can be strengthened through community organizations and institutions, and building participatory capacity.

**Principle 4: Water is a public good and has a social and economic value in all its competing uses**

Within this principle it is vital to recognize the basic right of all human beings to have access to clean water and sanitation at an affordable price. Past failure to recognize the economic value of water has led to wasteful and environmentally damaging uses of the resource.

Managing water as an economic good is an important way of achieving efficient and equitable use, and of encouraging conservation and protection of water resources.

Value and charges are two different things. The value of water in alternative uses is important for the rational allocation of water as a scarce resource, whether by regulatory or economic means. Charging for water is applying an economic instrument to affect behaviour towards conservation and efficient water usage, to provide incentives for demand management, ensure cost recovery, and to signal consumers' willingness to pay for additional investments in water services.