

GWP Country Leaders Peer to Peer Exchange

Summary Proceedings

GWP country leaders
meet your peers!



Working towards stronger Country Water Partnerships

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| CWPs | Country Water Partnerships (of GWP) |
| GWP | Global Water Partnership |
| IWRM | Integrated Water Resources Management |
| MSPs | Multi-Stakeholder Platforms |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| RWPs | Regional Water Partnerships (of GWP) |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| StRONG | Strengthening Regional Operational Network Growth (GWP Programme) |

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

GWP country platforms are fundamental to GWP's structure and to the achievement of GWP's mission - to advance governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development. The platforms mobilize partners and stakeholders, implement activities, catalyze change, and support knowledge sharing and learning. GWP has been supporting the establishment (and strengthening) of Country Water Partnerships since 2000.

GWP's new 2020-2025 Strategy is ambitious and calls for 'Providing Water Solutions for the SDGs'; 'Catalysing Climate Resilient Development'; and 'Enhancing Transboundary Water Cooperation'. To deliver on this strategy and acknowledging the responsibility at the national level, GWP's strategy aims to strengthen its Country Water Partnerships. These country-level multi-stakeholder platforms are one of the key avenues to amplify GWP convening capacities and actions, and ultimately to drive change in the way water resources are managed and used.

The country platforms across the network share common challenges, related to their institutional set-ups and operational capacity, to the availability of resources, to the mobilization of partners, and to the amplification of their strategic positioning. Many have developed strategies over the years for growth and success – for example, developing institutional capacity, mobilizing partners, positioning themselves as a key water sector organization in their country, and mobilizing resources to implement programmes. While recognizing there is no “magic bullet” approach that works across all country platforms, it is expected that sharing experiences from different country platforms will help others build on those experiences by adapting them to their own circumstances.

The GWP Strengthening Regional Operational Network Growth (StRONG) programme was designed during 2019 in conjunction with the new GWP Strategy 2020-2025 and GWP Business Plan 2020-2022. The aim is to enhance the capacity of Regional and Country Water Partnerships to deliver the targets set out in the Strategy in a consistent, reliable, and agile way. Under the StRONG umbrella, GWP aims, in particular, to offer support to strengthen facilitation and convening capacities, identify and offer commonly used and effective tools, and create space for learning from each other. It is in this context that the Country leaders Peer to Peer Exchange was conceived.

1.2 Peer to Peer Exchange event

GWP global secretariat organised an online peer-to-peer learning exchange with leaders from its country platforms on 21 January 2021. The event focused on how to mobilise and engage for stronger Country Water Partnerships (CWPs) and other GWP country platforms to amplify GWP's impact. It was also the launch event in a year-long celebration of GWP's 25th Anniversary.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Provide an opportunity for country leaders to learn from their peers and jointly come up with ideas on how to build stronger CWPs for increased impact
- Identify successful strategies and experiences
- Identify shared challenges and harvest suggestions as to how to overcome them
- Inform GWPO and RWPs of approaches to strengthening CWPs
- Enhance country leaders' sense of belonging to, and benefiting from, a global network and a global community

The participants targeted were GWP country leaders (Chairs, Executive secretaries, and, as relevant, other individual(s) driving the growth of country platforms). Regional Chairs, Regional Coordinators, Regional secretariat staff, as well as GWPO staff were also invited to participate.

The event was organized through two online sessions to cover different time zones. Interpretation was provided in Russian, French and Spanish.

As part of the registration process, participants responded to a brief survey, sharing their views on the main benefits of Multi-stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs); the major challenges of CWPs and tips for stakeholder engagement. The results of this survey, presented in Annex 1, informed the development of the agenda.

People from 58 countries registered and more than 200 participants attended the two sessions that were organized, around half of them being GWP country leaders.

The summary of each segment of the event is presented below (all links to the material are provided at the end).

2 Introductory segment

Introduction

Julienne Roux (Senior Network Specialist-GWPO) welcomed the participants to the event. She highlighted that special emphasis would be placed during the session on *sharing of experiences and learning from each other*, and on discussing our approach to *stakeholder engagement* (given GWP's value added role and emphasis on engaging multiple stakeholders).

She also presented perspectives gathered from the participants on the benefits and challenges around multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) as part of the registration survey. Key benefits highlighted were *learning and collaboration*, increasing the chances of systemic change and that partners also appreciated *access to skills and resources* from one another in MSPs. The major difficulty flagged in the survey was that multi-stakeholder partnerships *require time and resources* to design and implement properly. Country leaders indicated that their main areas of interest were how to keep *partners engaged* and how to design projects.

GWP celebrates 25 years - Address from GWP Interim Executive Secretary

Peter Repinski, GWP Interim Executive Secretary, emphasized the crucial role played by CWPs in the GWP network and expressed his thanks and appreciation for the great work done and results achieved. It is apt on this 25th anniversary to highlight the achievements, strengths, and values of the Partnership and to share these in this event. It is important to recognize people that contribute to GWP's achievements and encouraged all to tell their stories. Peter Repinski urged Partners to celebrate knowledge and learning that drive global, regional, and national agendas. He mentioned on-going and emerging projects that 'make change happen'. Looking ahead, he noted the importance of reinforcing the network to ensure continuity for impactful actions. He wished everyone fruitful deliberations in the country leader exchange event.

Scene setting on country platforms in the GWP ecosystem

Ralph Philip, Senior Specialist, Technical coordinator STRONG programme, GWPO outlined that key objectives of GWP in its establishment were to create partnerships at various levels to better coordinate action around sustainable water management. The partnerships are the basis of the organization, and they are formally set up in GWP's structure as Regional and Country Water Partnerships. These partnerships are MSPs for the water sector. The set up they have, safeguarded through the conditions of accreditation, ensures a diverse partnership base, not captured by interest groups, that abides by GWP principles and values.

He emphasised that CWP are a means to bring partner organizations together and help improve coordination among many actors and donors. GWP country platforms were always very important in the network, but have become even more vital in the past years, considering the major global frameworks (such as the SDGs and Paris agreement) to which countries have committed. To be effective in this context, country platforms are essential.

One critical aspect of GWP's CWPs is that there is a wide diversity of set up and approaches across the 68 CWPs in the network. This includes variable levels of ambitions and abilities to mobilise stakeholders and to develop and deliver programmes. Ralph Philip recalled earlier work (2017) on CWPs, where GWP highlighted several important dimensions along these different types of capacities, that can be barriers to grow, become more influential, and have a stronger impact. It showed that many of the CWPs have a lot of potential to grow.

A key objective of the 2020-2025 GWP Strategy is to equip GWP's country level entities with the *necessary operational capacities, leadership skills, partner connections and financial and human resources to deliver the strategy targets in a consistent, reliable, and agile way*

Ralph Philip urged participants to use this exchange opportunity (with participants coming from diverse country platforms) to make progress together as a network, overcome some of the barriers that exist and gradually build the capacity at country level to achieve objectives that WP has in its strategy.

3 Sharing of experience by CWP leaders

In each session, two CWP leaders shared their experiences.

- **Zelina Ibrahim**, Vice-Chair of **GWP Malaysia** (South East Asia), told the story of how water sector actors started collaborating in 1993 in the country and have built through GWP an important platform for improving water resources management. She described key approaches implemented to grow the platform, including strategic positioning and leadership, as well as building institutional and administrative capacity. Today, GWP Malaysia consists of 59 Partners.

Highlights & points of interest from participants (see Figure 2a):

- ✓ *The role of a **champion** (in Malaysia's case – the host institution)*
- ✓ ***Continuity & commitment** of partners (including the Chair & volunteers)*
- ✓ *Ensuring **strategic positioning, linkages with key influencers & visibility** at national & regional levels including high profile priority initiatives (e.g. responding to flood challenges)*
- ✓ *A good **mix of stakeholder** categories including active involvement of **multi-level private sector actors***
- ✓ *An **innovative institutional structure**, with twin organizations set up in response to different needs (Malaysian Water Partnership, an NGO hosting the accredited Country Water Partnership)*

- ✓ **Challenges & needs**– **financial sustainability, limited capacity** (one staff member), the need from regional and global levels to identify funding opportunities, **support in proposal writing and accessing funds for big projects such as GCF as well as online training & communications.**
- **Victor Kongo**, Executive Director of **GWP Tanzania** (Southern Africa), asked participants to consider critical questions that should guide the building of CWPs – where do the CWPs stand in terms of relevance, ownership, sustainability and responsibility, and identity and belonging (in the GWP network & organization)? He shared Tanzania’s journey to becoming a strong and impactful CWP, emphasizing the importance of leadership and championing, and the development of strategic partnerships – such as with the Ministry of Water. He also highlighted a niche area in knowledge management & research, and strategic partnerships developed with international knowledge partners (international universities and networks).

Highlights & points of interest from participants (see Figure 2a):

- ✓ **Establishing a CWP for the right reasons** attracting the right partners – serving a meaningful purpose (not only money!)
 - ✓ **Personal commitment, championing & leadership, and the role of the youth** (planning for sustainability through internship programmes)
 - ✓ **The importance of strategic thinking, visioning & planning; developing strategic partnerships; fundraising** (identifying opportunities & writing proposals with Partners); attending to **operational & administrative capacity** (including dedicated offices & infrastructure). This cannot be done in a voluntary set-up!
 - ✓ **The perception that if something is for free – it has no value**
- **Valdemeira da Silva Tavares**, Chair of **GWP Sao Tome Principe** (Central Africa), presented the origins of the CWP, which was founded in 2008, and shared an overview of the activities that the CWP has implemented, which have included a strong emphasis on gender, youth and the hearing-impaired. An important strength of the CWP is that it is well recognized today in the landscape of actors in the country. This has been made possible through close collaboration with key institutional and development actors, as well as formal recognition within the national federation of NGOs. Strategic partnerships have been forged nationally and internationally (with lead ministries, Red Cross, Portuguese Waters, UNICEF as examples).

Highlights & points of interest from participants (see Figure 2b):

- ✓ **The setting up of the CWP as an autonomous legal entity with financial and administrative capacity**
 - ✓ **The importance of relevant partners and signing Memorandums of Understanding – forging strategic partnerships for joint activities** – national policy & legislation as well as local youth (school), gender & community hygiene projects
 - ✓ **Innovative approaches for IWRM awareness for the hearing impaired, as well as use music for water awareness in other activities**
 - ✓ **Insertion in the UN system** – through registration with UNICEF
 - ✓ **Challenges & needs** – Financial resources and setting up separate offices for the CWP (to encourage more visibility and independent operations)
- **Carmen Gonzales**, Chair of **GWP Nicaragua** (Central America), represented by Ms Margarita Figueroa of GWP Central America, shared good practices and lessons learned. For instance, she highlighted the need to understand the concerns of the partners, to identify common interests, and to promote collaboration through different means, including working groups or virtual platforms.

Highlights & points of interest from participants (see Figure 2b):

- ✓ Invest time & energy in partner engagement, coordinate & achieve synergy
- ✓ The partners need encouragement to identify actions of interest and integrate them into their own work plans
- ✓ Ensuring partner participation & contributions (human, financial, material & technical)
- ✓ Key challenges included fund raising and access to sources of resources for greater sustainability

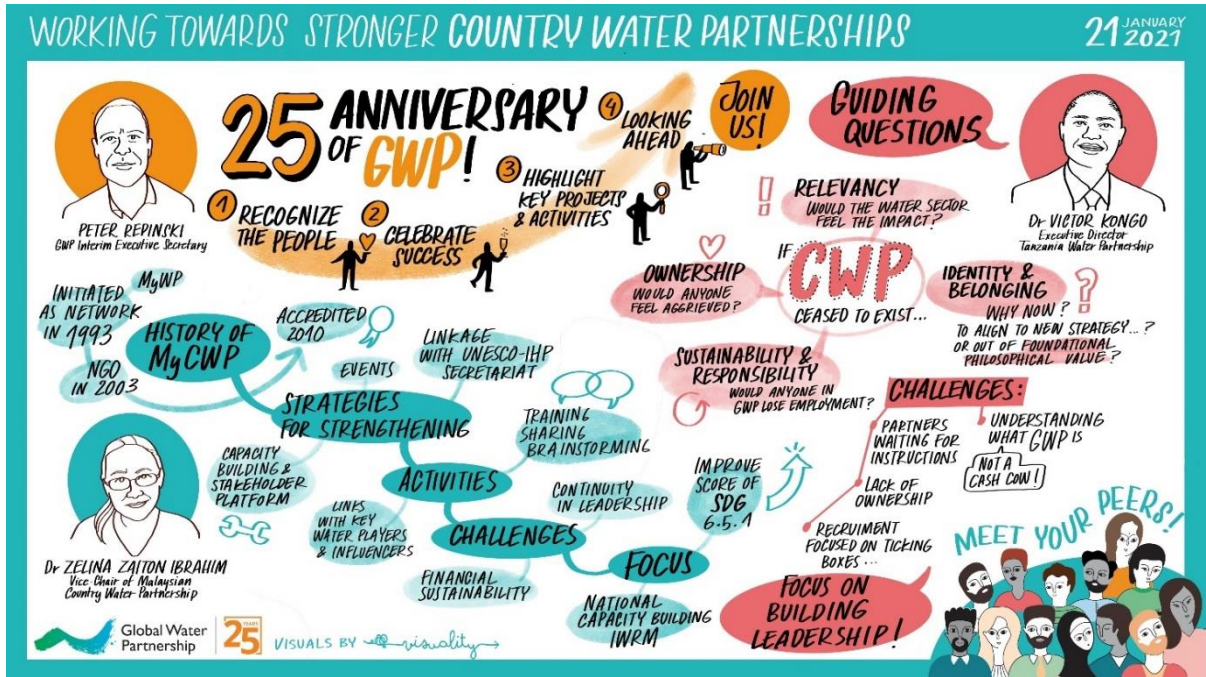


Figure 2a: Sharing of experience from Malaysia and Tanzania country leaders, session 1

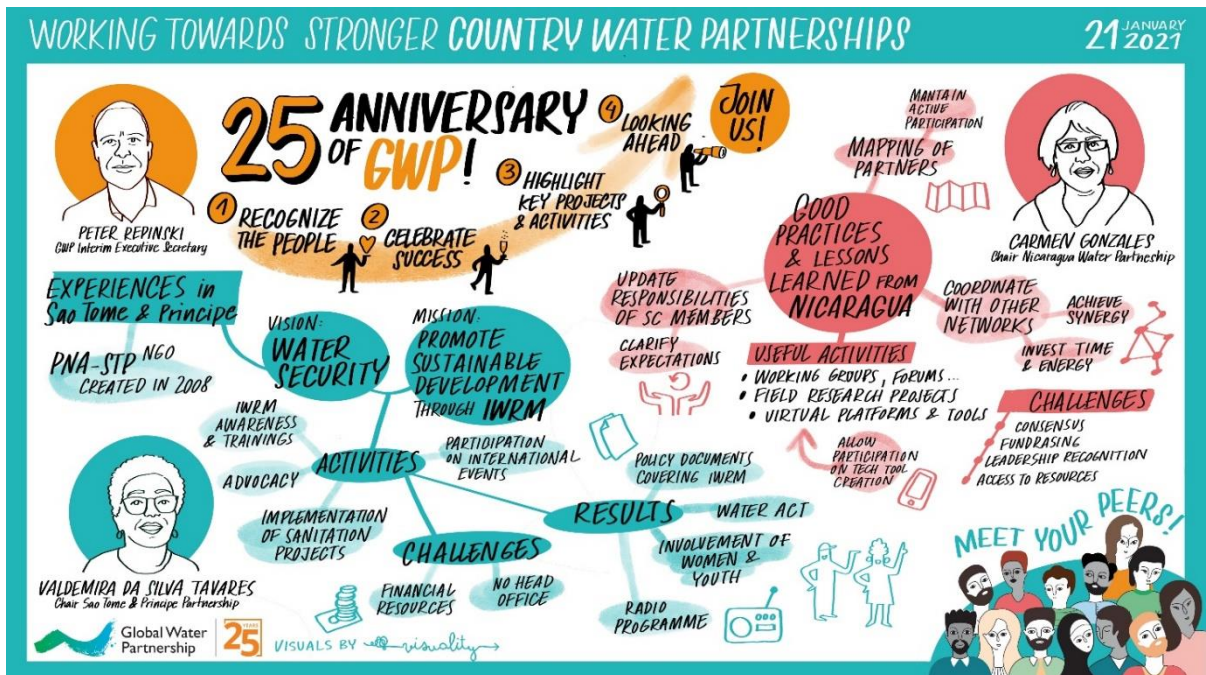


Figure 2b: Sharing of experience from Sao Tome Principe and Nicaragua country leaders, session 2

4 Discussions on partner engagement strategies

The participants were invited to a breakout group discussion on partner engagement strategies for building effective multi-stakeholder country water platforms; the process of identifying stakeholders, grouping them according to interest and power, and how to best communicate with each of these groups. The purpose was for Country Platform Leaders to: (1) think critically about their traditional stakeholder base and those they want to engage with in the future and; (2) share ideas with their peers about current and potential partner engagement strategies.

The session commenced with an introduction to the Stakeholder Analysis methodology, which described the main benefits and steps towards putting together a stakeholder matrix: (1) list all relevant stakeholders; (2) rank each of them by “power” and “interest”; (3) input them into the four quadrant of the matrix and; (4) identify key partner engagement strategies for each quadrant. This was followed by a 20-minute group discussion where a country platform leader volunteered to develop a stakeholder analysis based on one of their recent or ongoing initiative. Each of 5 groups had a facilitator and a Miro board artist & rapporteur. Ten minutes were allocated for each rapporteur to highlight one innovative stakeholder engagement strategy that came out from their group discussion.

4.1 Stakeholder identification

Key stakeholders identified by the participants included:

- Water sector stakeholders – Ministries of Water, water managers, water user associations, water utilities/boards, water committees
- Mainly water based but other common sectors – environment/natural resources/ agriculture, energy, terrestrial development line ministries emerging
- Academia, donors, and NGOs
- Private sector (engineers and consulting firms)
- Regional and international stakeholders
- Media
- Local authorities

4.2 Categorisation & prioritisation of Stakeholders

The participants were invited to categorize the key stakeholders identified according to their interest and power. Once stakeholders were identified, participants could then consider the stakeholder engagement strategies to deploy. Whilst it is difficult to generalise about the results from the stakeholder exercise, a few observations were made in the examples shared:

- In the top right quadrant (high interest & high power) mainly water sector stakeholders were featured – with some stakeholders from other development sectors and development projects also beginning to feature (in particular in the SDG 6 related activities).
- In the bottom left quadrant (low interest & low power), depending on the groups, civil society organisations, NGOs, local actors, youth & private sector were identified
- Media and academia were categorized with different power by different groups.

4.3 Engagement Strategies

Numerous stakeholder engagement strategies were identified. The main ones included:

- Partner meetings
- Face-to-face and online national & regional forums with governments (and others such as academia) – multi-stakeholder dialogues
- High level Ministerial panels
- Building relations and securing government support for GWP activities
- Joint collaborative efforts with governments
- Awareness raising and capacity building initiatives (e.g. IWRM training for government officials)

- Working groups (e.g. technical)
- Project-based engagement – involve partners in opportunities
- Local community meetings with traditional /local leaders
- Municipal public audience engagement/ public consultations
- Gender equality promotional meetings
- Joint community clean-up activities with NGOs and the public
- Social media platforms to keep partners informed
- Organise competitions and awards (for example with journalists)
- Involve private sector in joint project development & implementation (Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities?)

Stakeholder Analysis & Partner Engagement Strategies

Breakout Session: Visual Example

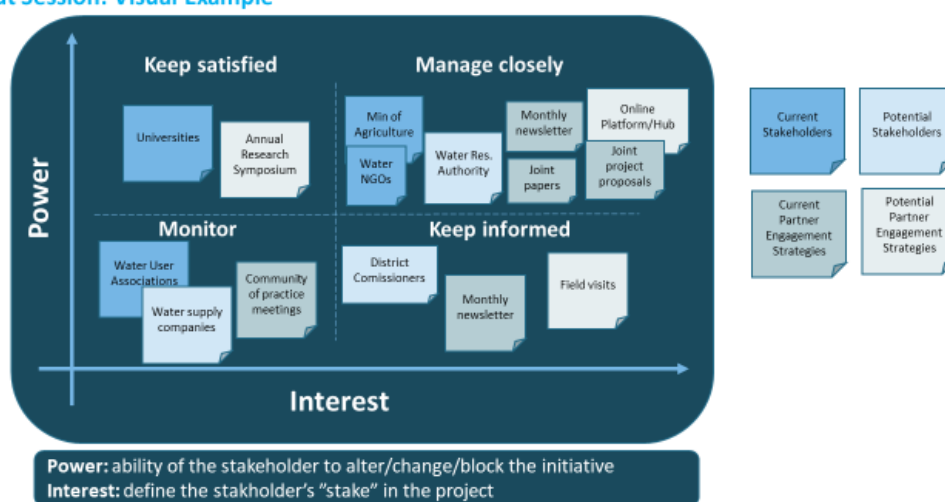


Figure 3: Visual showing the presented example of Stakeholder analysis and Engagement strategy

5 Conclusion and way forward

Molly Robbins (*Strategy & Partnership Specialist at GWPO*) facilitated the closing segment that reflected on the event and presented key next steps for further engagement with the country platforms. The country platform leaders were also polled about their interests for future engagement.

Two regional coordinators were invited to reflect and comment on the event:

- *Fany Wedahuditama, Regional coordinator of GWP South East Asia*, noted that CWP include both the CWP network of Partners and the CWP Secretariat. These function together but their roles are different; a strong secretariat plays an important role in moving the CWP forward. Engaging the partners is critical and, in South East Asia, establishing technical working groups has generated much interest and involvement. To further develop CWPs, opportunities to work collaboratively at the regional level through the RWP should be pursued to facilitate interactions across countries and across the world.
- *Fabiola Tábora, Regional coordinator GWP Central America*, noted that CWPs range from informal to formal but all need to establish a mechanism to leverage financial resources. Partner organisations are very busy with their own work so it is challenging trying to engage all. Knowledge of the partners is critical and ensuring 'spaces' for

their engagement and capacity development is done to strengthen CWP role and performance. The CWP objectives must be clear, and fostering alliances for joint technical and financial resource efforts essential.

A poll was undertaken to explore the country leaders’ areas of interest going forward (see Table 2).

Table 2: Combined results from the polls from session 1 and session 2 on topics of interests for participants to explore going forward

| TOPIC | AVERAGE% | RANK |
|---|----------|------|
| Institutional set up | 32.5 | 5 |
| Effective Communication | 39.5 | 3 |
| Conflict resolution & mediation | 23.5 | 6 |
| Knowledge management for complex data | 34.5 | 4 |
| Financial resource mobilisation | 66 | 1 |
| Specific thematic areas (climate resilience, SDGs. Transboundary water, gender, private sector, and youth engagement) | 44 | 2 |

The poll results show that a priority interest of country leaders is in **financial resource mobilisation**. **Thematic engagement** also ranked highly indicating the appreciation for technical substantive content and collective knowledge and skills – to perform better as well as for partner benefit. Indeed, country leaders also expressed interest to improve **communication skills** to be more effective.

In conclusion, Molly Robbins explained that the the outcomes of the event, and of its feedback survey, will inform the further development of StRONG programme of actions, including design of various strengthening activities that respond to the needs expressed by country and regional leaders. She presented the key next steps already identified towards further engagement with the country platforms:

- A first line of work is continuing and amplifying ongoing efforts to strengthen the institutional set up of country platforms, supporting accreditation processes and the development of the financial management capacity of CWPs.
- A second line of work focuses on increasing experience sharing and cross-learning across the network. GWPO is dedicating resources this year to support several activities, which includes peer to peer exchanges, which may potentially be in person between small groups of country platform leaders. If some country leaders are looking to have more in-depth exchanges with some of their peers, they are welcome to let the GWPO StRONG team know.
- Supporting ‘MSPs’ to bring about change in water resources management, through a dedicated donor project. Included are peer to peer exchanges, regional and country workshops, and work around the GWP Toolbox, which should help increase connections across the network through an enhanced interactive platform for communication. GWPO will engage regions and countries to better define some of these activities.
- Continuing to support the country platforms in the programmatic work on the SDGs, climate resilience and transboundary water management.

Molly Robbins also reiterated that there was no better opportunity to work with GWP’s country leaders, to kick off GWP’s 25th Anniversary celebrations and that GWP looks forward to celebrating GWP’s success, values, and strengths together with all.

In closing, participants shared comments in the chat reflecting on their takeaways from the session. The organizing team gave thanks to all participants and speakers, and expressed a desire to continue moving forward with shared efforts to strengthen GWP country platforms.

6 Key perspectives coming out of the event

This section presents perspectives coming out of the event as a whole.

6.1 What works well at country level

Strategic & Positioning

- Leadership, ownership, commitment, belief, sense of purpose and being relevant
- Dedicated efforts of champions (individual and partner/host institutions) that commit time and resources to lead the country platforms, develop strategies and relationships with key players and donors
- Recognised status in the country which clarifies how government can be involved. Government buy-in and support and belief in how the CWP can serve them is important – aim to ensure that governments need the CWP

Institutional & Operational

- Established governance, institutional, operational, and programmatic set up and a strong secretariat – enables the CWP being taken seriously by partners (increased commitment) and external parties that wish to work with the CWP
- Internships for youth and professional and competency development

Programmatic

- Being responsive to the priority needs and emergencies (at local and national levels) through involvement of appropriate stakeholders and dedicated activities builds credibility and CWP track record
- Engagement beyond national borders is beneficial – in transboundary water management context, or regional and international programmes (making use of the opportunities in GWP)
- Identifying the right strategic partners to develop responsive programmes (beyond usual water bias)
- Partnering with UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP mentioned)

Network/Partnership

- Broad and inclusive stakeholders in the partnership – multiple sectors, multiple levels, diverse categories of stakeholders (government, academia, NGOs, CSOs, private sector, considering youth and gender)
- CWP activities must benefit partners to keep them interested. These don't have to be financial resource benefits but, in some cases, they are – such as in the private sector and cooperation in developing and implementing their Corporate Social Responsibility plans – forging strategic partnerships is critical
- Payment of membership fees can assist in basic operations and commitment

6.2 What are critical challenges & needs for the country platforms?

Strategic, Institutional & Operational

- Need leadership, ownership and relevant programmes and service – how is this possible in a loose voluntary network?
- For what and how can CWPs need to deliver in the longer term. Currently, many are not equipped and only operate on projects and project funds, which are not sustainable. How do we ensure continuity of impactful actions?

- Partner institutions are too busy with own institutional obligations and jobs and can't dedicate adequate time and energy to developing and strengthening the CWP
- Government buy-in and involvement and capacity of government officials can be lacking
- Limited/lack of financial resources for staff operations and programmes
- CWP institutional capacity to identify opportunities and develop proposals/prepare projects
- CWP identity and sense of belonging in GWP structure and functioning
- Diversity of CWPs is an asset and a liability. In global, continental, and regional programmes - what can and do GWP CWPs offer as service. Competency and capabilities vary with different levels of interest, ambition, and capacity – what is the basic minimum service a CWP can offer? In identifying opportunities – what can GWPO and RWPs promise?
- It is critical that CWPs build their track record and visibility through impactful results. CWPs need to find ways to focus also on developing a long-term vision with quick victories!

Programmatic

- Capacity to develop programmes and resource mobilise
- How to identify and engage potential strategic partners?
- Monitoring & evaluation, implementation & Learning

Network/Partnership

- Keeping partners engaged and interested
- Inadequately engaged with civil society and the local level in many CWPs
- Inadequately engaged beyond the 'water box' to respond to the challenges
- Need to revisit the membership in current context to bring the right partners on board. Thorough stakeholder analyses are needed to ensure emerging stakeholders such as the private sector, women and youth, civil society and other key sectors (land, energy, finance, and planning for example) are identified and engaged

In *conclusion*, the event showed that there is tremendous knowledge in the network and commitment to meaningful sharing. Country leaders can greatly benefit from each other's rich experiences. Further, regional water partnerships and GWP global secretariats also benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of the situation at country level. Such exchanges could be usefully pursued in the future.

List of session materials

All material is available here: [GWP Country Leaders - Meet Your Peers! Working Towards Stronger CWPs - GWP](#)

Video recordings:

- [Video recording session 1](#)
- [Video recording session 2](#)
- [Address from GWP Interim Executive Secretary](#)
- Video recordings of the 4 CWP presentations:
 - GWP Malaysia presentation
 - GWP Tanzania presentation
 - GWP Sao Tome Principe presentation
 - GWP Nicaragua presentation

PowerPoints:

- [Overall slide deck](#) (*Setting the scene* – Julienne Roux; *CWPs in GWP Ecosystem* – Ralph Philip; and *CWPs recipes for partner engagement*: Laurent Charles Tremblay-Lévesque)
- [Presentation from Malaysian Country Water Partnership](#) - Dr Zelina Zaiton Ibrahim (Vice-Chair)
- [Presentation from Tanzania Water Partnership](#) - Dr Victor Kongo (Executive Director)
- [Presentation from Sao Tome Principe Partnership Valdemira da Silva Tavares](#) (Chair)
- [Presentation from Nicaragua Water Partnership](#) - Carmen Gonzales (Chair)

Visuals of the sessions

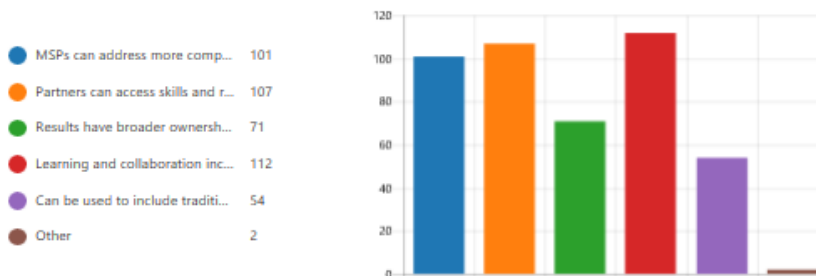
[List of participants](#)

[Link to the contact form](#) where participants can exchange their contact information

Annex 1: Results from the pre-registration survey

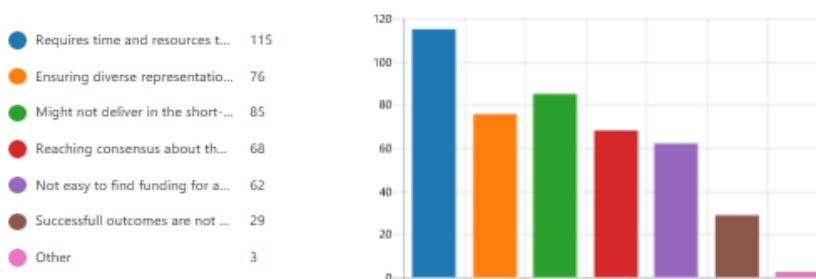
8. What do you think are the most important benefits of building multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs)? (Choose up to 3)

[More Details](#)



9. What do you think are the major difficulties with MSPs? (Choose up to 3)

[More Details](#)



10. What sort of tips for partners engagement would be most interesting to you? (Choose 3)

[More Details](#)

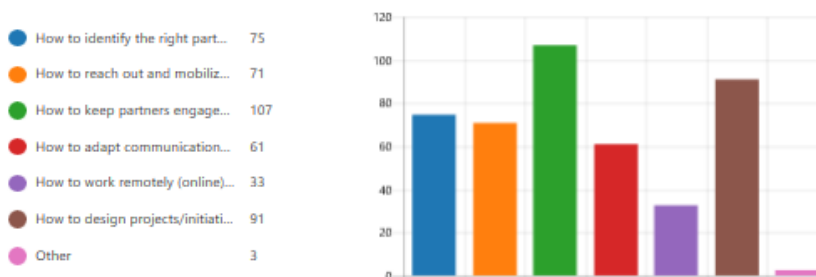


Figure 1 a b and c: Extract from pre-registration results showing country leader views on benefits & difficulties with MSPs and their areas of greatest interest

Country leaders also highlighted the following issues and needs in the pre-registration survey:

- There is an important difference between CWP secretariat and the partnership platform itself.
- CWP staff need training
- There is a need to exchange experience with other regions and implement joint inter-regional projects
- Having regular dialogues and networking to design and implement funded projects and initiatives is needed
- The need to mobilise financial resources/ fund raising issues
- Having a clear vision and looking for allies are daily tasks and that GWP should also tackle the fundamental challenge on limited capacity (related to, but not limited to, volunteerism) at CWP level. Valuable to use this platform to understand this issue better, learn from successful CWPs if they could work around this or not, and if they couldn't, how should GWP proceed?